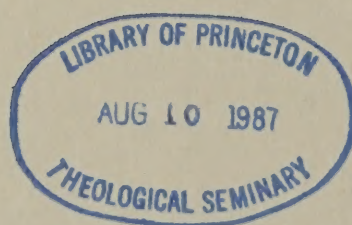


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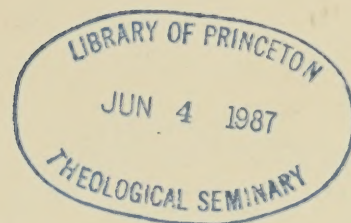
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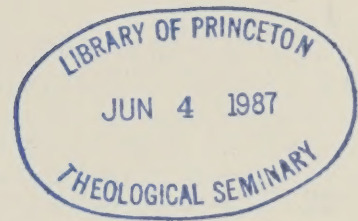
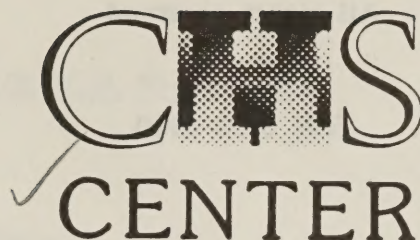
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PROTOCOL OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH COLLOQUY: 28 SEPTEMBER 1986

CALVINISM AS THEOLOGIA RHETORICA

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CALVINISM AS THEOLOGIA RHETORICA¹

William J. Bouwsma

The rhetorical tradition, given new life by Renaissance humanism, supplied the dynamic element in Calvin's thought. It constantly challenged his philosophical culture, and Calvinism had its origins in his struggle to come to terms with the double legacy of philosophy and rhetoric. Much of Calvin's genius lay in the skill, largely rhetorical, that enabled him to contain - and sometimes to conceal - the tensions and contradictions in his culture. This is what makes his achievement so characteristic of his time.

Calvin's humanism is apparent, on the most superficial level, in his love of the classics. The youthful enthusiasm that had nourished his Seneca commentary continued to find expression in the classical allusions that abound in the works of his maturity. He could only hint at his pleasure in studying the Bible by comparing it to his delight in the classics. "Read Demosthenes or Cicero," he suggested, "read Plato, Aristotle, or others of that crew [cohorte]: they will, I admit, allure you, delight you, move you, enrapture you in wonderful measure. Then betake yourself to that sacred reading."² His division of classical authors here into two groups is significant: he mentions first the orators of Greece and Rome; the philosophers come second. His reliance on pagan literature in the Institutes and elsewhere is also revealing. He could probably not have avoided treating in places the views of philosophers; they were commonly invoked in theological discourse. But he was under no such obligation to cite, as he regularly did, Cicero and Quintilian, Homer and Vergil, Plutarch and Seneca, Horace, Juvenal, and Ovid, the authors most cherished by humanists. He did so not only because the readers whom he chiefly addressed loved these authors but because he loved them himself.

His study of Scripture, indeed, sometimes set off in him associations with the classics. He traced Paul's organic conception of the church back to Livy,³ and the darkness at the moment of Christ's death reminded him that "the ancient poets, in their tragedies, imagine that the light of the sun is withdrawn from the earth when any abominable crime is committed, in order to show a portent of divine wrath."⁴ This parallel did not trouble him, but another, between the sudden intervention that had transformed the despair of Abraham into joy and the deus ex machina of various pagan myths, did disturb him. He attributed the similarity to Satan, who, "by figments of this kind, has endeavored to obscure the wonderful and amazing interventions of God."⁵

But his humanism also went deeper; as early as his Seneca commentary Calvin understood language, like a humanist, as conventional. "It is usage rather than etymology or original meaning [proprietas]," he wrote, "that distinguishes one word from another."⁶ He agreed with Quintilian, to be sure, in identifying proper usage as "the practice of educated men."⁷ Following the language of "the common people" would be "only barbarism."⁸ He was also untroubled by linguistic change; Moses, he noted, had described as "'kings' those who hold the first place in a town or in any considerable assembly of men," although now the word is used quite differently.⁹

He repeated from time to time the humanist cliché that language is "the bond of human society."¹⁰ God has put us into the world and given us speech "to communicate with each other."¹¹ The ability to speak, for Calvin, is basic to our dealing with each other humanly. "If there had been no language," he asked, "what could distinguish or differentiate men from brute beasts? They would all treat each other barbarously; there would be no humanity [*humanitas*] among them."¹² For him, as for the civic humanists of Renaissance Italy, the point had large political significance. "We know," he remarked, "that commands are expressed orally; and in communication among men, he who rules proclaims by mouth what he wishes to be done."¹³ This, however, requires rhetorical skill, for "doctrine stated generally does not move us."¹⁴ A prince has "not only to rule the people by his decisions and authority but also to persuade them to obey." The ancients had represented this truth by imagining gold chains in the mouth of Hercules "by which he attracted the ears of the common people."¹⁵

Calvin was especially impressed by the capacity of language to convey feelings that we might otherwise conceal from one another in the "hidden and tortuous recesses of the heart." The tongue, its messenger, communicates what is stored there in what seemed to this reticent man a cause for wonder. It was always "a kind of miracle when, through the Lord's doing, one's tongue betrays his mind and inward feelings." From language, then, comes intimacy, "mutual support in charity" and "tender love and fraternity."¹⁶ Speech, by the same token, combats loneliness. "Nothing is more disagreeable," he reflected, perhaps remembering his exile in Strasbourg,

than to wander among a people with whom we cannot communicate by language, the bond of society. Since language is, as it were, the image and mirror of the mind, those who lack the use of it are as strange to each other as the beasts of the forest.¹⁷

Effective communication, for Calvin as for other humanists, required more than fidelity to truth, the aim of philosophical discourse, which, because of its refusal to make concessions to a general audience and its specialized vocabulary, Erasmus had compared to infantile babbling.¹⁸ The distance between one human being and another, from this perspective, can only be bridged by decorum, that central rhetorical virtue. "A wise teacher," Calvin insisted,

accommodates himself to the understanding of those who must be taught. He begins with first principles in teaching the weak and ignorant and should not rise any higher than they can follow. In short he instills his teaching drop by drop, lest it overflow.¹⁹

Since audiences differ from age to age, decorum also has a historical dimension. Communication is not timeless but timely. "It would be a cold way of teaching," Calvin observed, "if the teachers do not carefully consider the needs of the times and what is appropriate to the people, for in this matter nothing is more unbalanced than absolute balance."²⁰ His esteem for decorum provides a clue, often ignored, to understanding much in his own discourse. He was more concerned to sway a particular audience than to achieve the "absolute balance" of a detached and systematic theology. Calvin was a reformer as well as a Reformer, and his denunciations of sin are particularly unbalanced. This has led to the mistaken view that he thought God's image and likeness had been

altogether obliterated by the fall.

The failure of Job's friends to console him was, for Calvin, a flagrant example of neglecting decorum. Consolation requires "a singular prudence" and careful consideration, for "afflictions are like sicknesses; if a doctor used the same remedy for every sick person, how would that be? It is necessary in the first place to consider what people are like, and then how to deal with them."²¹ We must persuade those we wish to console that "in some degree we are one with them." Truth like that so abrasively administered by Job's friends is only useful when it is "adapted in such a way as to have an effect on those who hear it."²² Job's friends had neglected to consider "the person whom they addressed, for it is necessary to treat one individual differently from another."²³

Calvin thought figurative language particularly effective. "Although a figurative expression is less precise," he replied to one of his critics,

it expresses with greater significance and elegance what, said simply and without figure, would have less force and address. Hence figures are called the eyes of speech, not because they explain the matter more correctly than simple, proper language, but because they win attention by their propriety, arouse the mind by their luster, and by their lively similitude so represent what is said that it enters more effectively into the heart.²⁴

Both decorum and figure were, for Calvin, basic to eloquence which he praised as a "special grace of God."²⁵ The eloquence imparted by rhetoric was to grammar, for him, somewhat in the relationship of grace to law. The grammarian, like a schoolmaster, "trains a boy and then hands him over to someone else who polishes him in higher disciplines."²⁶ Rhetorical skills are "noble gifts of God that men put to good use" in their lives together: "they come from the Holy Spirit."²⁷

The depth of Calvin's esteem for rhetoric also found expression in his association of power with the "living voice of God," which he contrasted with "the empty and lifeless speech of men" because God's words are indistinguishable from his actions.²⁸ The same divine impulse that had brought writing into existence had compelled "the empty and formless matter of world, called chaos to shine with an admirable fitness [decore] and beauty." The creation itself was thus the product of a kind of divine rhetoric, shaped throughout by the decorum of the Master Rhetorician.²⁹ Calvin wrote these words when European writers were discovering that human beings can create imaginary worlds out of language.³⁰

But persuasio, in the rhetorical tradition, merged almost imperceptibly with philological scholarship: eruditio.³¹ The two interests were connected by the historical perspective of the Renaissance, a product of the concern of decorum with appropriateness to the times. Italian humanists, to develop their persuasive skills, imitated the most eloquent writers of antiquity. But, as Petrarch had already recognized, their world differed markedly from that of antiquity; and they concluded that, to make effective use of what they could learn from the ancients, they needed to understand the differences.³² This task

led them to an imaginative reconstruction of the ancient world through its literature. The result was a theory of imitation based on a distinction between what is perennially valuable in ancient culture - its essence or spirit - which they might hope to capture in their own discourse, and its time-bound accidents that it would be ridiculous, as they often put it, to "ape."³³ This view of imitation converted many humanists into *érudits*, and a few into historians as it stimulated in them an awareness of change and reflection on its causes and structure.

Since antiquity had chiefly to be studied in texts, *eruditio* required mastery of ancient languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, the "three languages" of scholarship. For Calvin, as for his master Erasmus, competence in these languages was essential for the study of Christian as well as of pagan literature; and, like other humanists, he celebrated recent advances in philology. It disturbed him that there were still "great theologians" who "furiously" denounced language study "with as many insults as they can muster."³⁴ Ignorance of languages resulted, he believed, in mistakes in matters "easy and obvious to anyone."³⁵

Most recent scholars have agreed that, for his time, Calvin was a distinguished textual scholar.³⁶ Proficient in all three languages, he relied on the best contemporary scholarship, notably that of Erasmus and Bude.³⁷ His early Seneca commentary corrected the spelling of earlier texts and revealed a special appreciation for the value of punctuation to clarify meaning; and he became increasingly sophisticated in the use of humanist historical-critical methods. Like other humanists, he castigated the mistakes of medieval scholars.³⁸ He criticized the imprecision of Roman historians,³⁹ and Xenophon for his "fables" and his betrayal of the "seriousness and fidelity of a historian" in praising Cyrus "like a rhetorician."⁴⁰ He criticized those who ignored such matters as "fickle spirits" who sinned "in seizing upon whatever first comes to hand, when they ought to proceed further, and in stubbornly clinging to one word, when they ought to compare many things together." Such "simple-minded" persons are "repeatedly deceived, for they do not apply themselves to a sound knowledge of anything."⁴¹

He applied the general principles of humanistic hermeneutics in his own scholarship. A major novelty of humanistic reading, based on seeing classical authors as human beings rather than vehicles of transcendent wisdom, was insistence that an interpreter of a text faithfully respect its author's intention. "Since it is almost [the expositor's] only task to unfold the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound," Calvin wrote, "he misses his mark, or at least strays outside his limits, insofar as he leads his readers away from the meaning of his author."⁴² Of a work of Augustine, one of his favorites, he remarked, "If I am twisting it into another meaning than Augustine's, let them not only rail at me as usual, but spit in my face."⁴³ He also insisted on understanding works as wholes and in the context of an author's general purpose. "When passages of Scripture are seized on rashly and no attention is given to context," he observed, "it is not to be wondered at that errors often arise."⁴⁴ As Erasmus had recommended, he clarified obscure passages by comparing them with others,⁴⁵ and he was unusual for his time in citing sources by work as well as by author.⁴⁶ Attention to such matters made him even more acute than Erasmus in distinguishing between authentic works of

Augustine and those falsely bearing his name.⁴⁷ He did not hesitate to criticize, on the basis of his own arithmetic, the chronology, attributed to Berosus, of the period after the flood.⁴⁸

With the novel resources of Renaissance eruditio, Calvin, in his Institutes and commentaries, was laying the foundations for a biblical criticism at once learned, responsible, and reverent. He blamed both sectaries and papists for their obscurantism in the face of the new scholarship. The former were "fickle spirits" who "gravely sin in seizing on whatever first comes to hand where they ought to compare many things together." Their simple-mindedness was "repeatedly deceived."⁴⁹ Papists, to their, shame, still clung to the Vulgate "when the writings of Valla, Faber [Lefèvre d'Étaples] and Erasmus, which are in everybody's hands, point the finger, even to children, at how it is corrupted in innumerable places." Because "the Hebrew or Greek original often exposes their ignorance in citing Scripture, checks their presumption, and so keeps down their thrasonic boasting," they dismissed "those who have spent much time and labor in the study of languages seeking the genuine sense of Scripture from the sources."⁵⁰ Calvin thought it important, even for the laity, "to know how Holy Scripture uses words. ...we cannot at all understand the doctrine of God if we do not know the procedure it employs and its style and language."⁵¹ He cited the ancients who, "though unacquainted with languages, notably Hebrew, always recognized that nothing is better than to consult the original for the true and genuine meaning."⁵²

He was also deeply aware of his membership in a community of Protestant exegetes, all indebted to Erasmus.⁵³ He did not respect them equally. He admired Bucer, "that man of holy memory, outstanding doctor in the church of God, whom I judge to have pursued a line of work in this field which is beyond reproach."⁵⁴ He thought Zwingli's exposition "apt and ready" but too free. About Luther he was equivocal; he often followed Luther but criticized him as "satisfied when he could draw out a fruitful doctrine" and insufficiently careful either with facts or manner of expression.⁵⁵ He admired the diligence of Oecolampadius but thought him superficial; Melancthon, he noted, had only touched on major points; Bullinger was too verbose.⁵⁶

The slogan ad fontes had led these scholars back to the exegetical tradition of the church, of which Calvin was generally respectful. "Since in this life we cannot hope to achieve a permanent agreement in our understanding of every passage of Scripture, however desirable that would be," he wrote, "we must not be carried away by the lust for novelty, nor be pushed into scurrility or impelled by hatred or titillated by ambition, but only do what is necessary and depart from the opinions of earlier exegetes only when it is beneficial."⁵⁷ He probably consulted the Glossa Ordinaria, Nicholas of Lyra, and other medieval commentators, generally deriding them but finding in them information regarding Jewish interpretation.⁵⁸ But above all he turned for guidance, though always with discrimination, to the Fathers. Their "godliness, learning, and sanctity," he wrote, "have secured them such great authority that we should not despise anything they have produced."⁵⁹ He especially approved of Chrysostom, long a favorite of humanist students of Scripture because of his simple, literal-historical approach to the text.⁶⁰ He included Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory, and Bernard, along with Augustine, among those who had at least intended to "build upon Christ."⁶¹ Much in his own exegesis applied what he had

learned from them, although whatever he found in earlier writers he made his own.

His humanistic erudition is evident in many particular observations about Scripture. He knew that biblical language follows principles of its own, beginning with the peculiarities of Hebrew word order.⁶² He recognized the importance of knowing the idioms of other languages. He saw the relevance to biblical references to Jesus's "brothers" of the tendency of some ancient peoples to consider all blood relations "brethren."⁶³ Again, biblical numbers are not to be taken literally: "thrice," for example, "stands for frequent repetition," and "ten signifies many."⁶⁴

He also knew that the biblical texts had been assembled and transmitted by fallible human beings over many centuries, and the relevance of this circumstance to their interpretation. The earliest materials in the Scriptures had been passed down orally, "over a long succession of years," before being put into writing.⁶⁵ The prophetic books also had a complex history. Originating as shapeless collections of prophecies, Calvin believed, they had undergone a series of later reworkings.⁶⁶ There were similar problems with the New Testament, including the possibility of copyists' errors. Calvin noted anomalous material that might have originated as the marginal note of a scribe;⁶⁷ and that, since a passage in the Fourth Gospel had been unknown in antiquity, "some conjecture it was introduced from elsewhere." He accepted it, but because it had long been received in the Latin church and contained nothing "unworthy of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁸ He knew too that the division of the biblical text into verses, and at least in some instances into chapters, was arbitrary and in some cases misleading.⁶⁹

Calvin, sometimes so desperate for "certitude," could, indeed, be surprisingly relaxed about the problems with which this *eruditio* confronted him. He tolerated some ambiguity in Scripture. "It is possible," he could say, "to expound this passage in four different ways. Everyone may use his own judgment."⁷⁰ "In a doubtful case," he remarked concerning the authorship of particular psalms, "everyone is free to choose the most likely conjecture."⁷¹ The variety of human minds, so that we tend to be pleased by different things, suggests that, even in the interpretation of Scripture, "each may use his own judgment, provided no one tries to force all others to obey his own rules."⁷² He refused to conjecture whether the devil had actually lifted Christ to the pinnacle of the temple, only remarking that "since the matter is uncertain and it is permissible to admit ignorance without harm, I prefer to suspend judgment."⁷³ In spite of his insistence that Scripture must always be useful, he also admitted that he was quite incapable of determining how this might be so for some passages, for example genealogies. The names of some of Noah's descendants seemed instructive, but he thought others too obscure to tell us "anything certain."⁷⁴ Against the claim of the Roman church to have settled the matter, he denied, with no sign of distress, the existence of a fixed New Testament canon.⁷⁵

He could also correct mistakes in Scripture. He believed that Matthew, in describing the journey of the magi, had improperly labeled as a star what must really have been a comet.⁷⁶ Indeed, he came close to the irony of that latter-day Calvinist Pierre Bayle when he professed to accept as historical

fact the darkness that covered the earth at the crucifixion and, having done so, noted that "the scribes and priests and a large part of the people calmly ignored and, their eyes closed, were unaware of, this darkening of the sun." This, he observed piously, "ought to strike us with horror at their monstrous madness; they must have been more stupid than the insensible beasts." He doubted, in any event, that the eclipse had been seen everywhere on earth.⁷⁷

The openness to which some of these passages attest was accompanied at times by hints of relativism and tolerance of human variety that suggest Montaigne. Calvin liked to depict Asia and Europe, East and West, as polar opposites, their contrasts a revelation of the wide range of human behavior. "We must observe the difference between oriental nations, which abound in various ceremonies," he asserted, "and ours, which behave more simply."⁷⁸ One aspect of Asian ceremonialism particularly interested him: its expression of grief by rending garments and tearing hair, which, Calvin dryly observed, "would be a trifle excessive among us, but each nation has its customs." "The Italians and other western nations," he noted, "allow the hair and beard to grow when they are in mourning; hence the phrase to lengthen the beard."⁷⁹ He thought it important to recognize such differences because what is suited to Asians might be inappropriate to Europeans. Thus if we wished to imitate them, "we would behave like apes or actors on the stage."⁸⁰

More commonly Calvin emphasized the differences between one time and another. He was prepared to take indirect, if not open, issue with Paul's belief that long hair for men is contrary to nature, explaining that Paul meant by nature "what was then accepted by agreement and custom, at least among the Greeks."⁸¹ He was also concerned lest David's nap on the fateful afternoon before he saw Bathsheba, should be reckoned against him as part of his sin. "As far as his sleeping is concerned," he said, "it is not to be condemned, as it might seem to some people who have not been accustomed to the way of life that prevailed then, and have thought that David is here caught in great intemperance." The siesta was only an ancient custom, not a sin.⁸² So too there was nothing reprehensible in David's dancing before the ark. Although some dancing is "dissolute and lascivious," David was simply conforming to a custom of the time. "We must all by nature make merry," Calvin observed tolerantly; "there is no one who is not given to it."⁸³

But the deepest mark of his humanism was his recognition that the Bible is throughout a rhetorical document and a work of interpretation. So, he wrote of the Gospels,

Because bare history would not be enough, indeed would be of no value for salvation, the Evangelists do not simply narrate that Christ was born, died, and conquered death, but at the same time they explain for what purpose he was born, died, and rose again, and what benefit thence comes to us.⁸⁴

The Evangelists were not annalists but artists.

Calvin was little troubled, therefore, by discrepancies among their accounts; indeed he was scrupulous to identify them. The authors of the Gospels, he explained, had not written "in such a way as always to preserve the

exact order of events, but rather to bring everything together so as to place before us a kind of mirror or screen on which the most useful things of Christ could be known." He argued, indeed, that the differences among the Gospels, given their general agreement, increased their credibility; their differences proved that there had been no collusion among their authors.⁸⁶ The differences also freed him to vary, for pedagogical purposes, the order in his own presentation. "Since the Evangelists transfer units of Christ's teaching here and there to different places as the occasion demands," he explained, "we need feel no compunction about rearranging them."⁸⁷ Nor did it disturb him that the biblical narrative contains inaccuracies and instances of carelessness on the part of its human authors. "It is well known," he observed, "that the Evangelists were not sufficiently careful with their time sequences, nor even bothered about the details of what was done or said."⁸⁸ For Calvin the notion of verbal inerrancy would have suggested willful blindness.

Eruditio was indeed, for Calvin, always the handmaiden of persuasio; it explained, above all, the persuasiveness of the Scriptures. His learning compelled him to recognize their eloquence; it illuminated their purposes and therefore their meaning. The traditional view that denied this eloquence, he argued, was based on ignorance; "Moses and several of the prophets are no less eloquent and polished in their Hebrew language than the Greeks and Latins, whether orators or philosophers, are in theirs."⁸⁹ He deeply admired the poetry of the prophetic books,⁹⁰ and he could even discern humor in Scripture; a Pauline play on words suggested to him that the Holy Spirit "has not always avoided pleasantries and jests," though he hastened to add that it always avoided scurrility.⁹¹ He analyzed biblical rhetoric as other humanists analyzed secular classics. "Hebrew writers," he might point out, "customarily use interrogatio when they wish emphatically to deny something; among them it is elegant, although for the Greeks and Latins it would be tasteless."⁹² The language with which Amnon referred to Tamar exemplified, for him, the subtlety of Hebrew; it enabled Amnon to conceal his incestuous desire for Tamar, perhaps first of all from himself, by referring to her as "the sister of his brother Absalom, as though she were not his own sister."⁹³

Above all Calvin called attention to the tropes that made Scripture eloquent. Often, to be sure, he insisted on sticking to what he called "the natural sense."⁹⁴ At times he argued for this in such absolute terms that he came close to contradicting his own appreciation for figurative language. "The true sense of Scripture," he might say, "is that which is natural [*germanus*] and simple." Hence we should "not only ignore as doubtful, but vigorously reject as deadly corruptions, those fictitious readings that lead us away from the literal sense."⁹⁵ In such passages, however, like other humanists, he was chiefly attacking the allegorical excesses of some medieval exegesis. "Allegories," he wrote, "ought not to go beyond the limits set by the rule of Scripture, let alone suffice as the foundation for any doctrines."⁹⁶ Allegorizing was too likely to degenerate into "playing games with the sacred Word of God, like tossing a ball back and forth."⁹⁷ Origen and his latter-day followers were the worst examples of this frivolity. Thinking "the literal sense too humble and mean," they had concluded, "that beneath the shell of the letter lurk more sublime mysteries that cannot be exposed except by hammering out allegories."⁹⁸

But otherwise Calvin cherished and regularly commented on figures of speech in Scripture, Christ himself, he noted had used figures; in the parable of the seed, for example, he had taught more clearly and with "more energy and efficacy than by simple expression."⁹⁹ The use of figurative language in Scripture proved decisively, against the Schoolmen, its general propriety in religious discourse. Beyond this, Calvin believed, an awareness of biblical rhetoric can contribute to theological understanding. Recognition that, in saying "This is my body," Christ was employing metonymy, for example, excludes both transubstantiation and the merely symbolic interpretation of the sacrament suggested by treating the words as metaphor.¹⁰⁰ Awareness that fire is a metaphor for God's wrath similarly avoids a crudely material conception of hell.¹⁰¹ But above all knowledge of biblical rhetoric explains its power. If the prophets "had spoken without figures and simply narrated the things with which they were concerned," he observed, "their speech would have been frigid and would not have penetrated spirits."¹⁰²

Like earlier commentators in the tradition of Augustine's De doctrina christiana, therefore, Calvin regularly identified metaphor, allegory, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, and other tropes. He recognized that light is a common Scriptural metaphor for "whatever pertains to full happiness," darkness a metaphor for "death and misery of every kind."¹⁰³ Jeremiah's figure of Rachel grieving for her children seemed to him a peculiarly vivid way of saying that the land would be desolate. "Rhetoricians," he observed in this connection, "rank personification very high, and Cicero, when he wants to teach the greatest splendor of oratory says that nothing touches an audience more than to raise the dead from below." Jeremiah, "though not taught in the schools of the rhetoricians," had been taught this device by the Holy Spirit "so that he might penetrate more effectively into the hearts of the people."¹⁰⁴

He was also sensitive to the voices of biblical writers, and, as Petrarch had recognized in the case of classical authors, aware that these were shaped by the circumstances of their lives. He identified Jeremiah as a man "from a pastoral town" who "had been from his boyhood among shepherds." This explained, he thought, peculiarities in Jeremiah's expression, "for education in large measure forms the speech of men."¹⁰⁵ In the New Testament, the Fourth Gospel was his favorite partly because of its "greater vivacity, strength, and power."¹⁰⁶ Paul's abrupt and "passionate outbursts" exemplified, for Calvin, the way in which feelings tend to find expression in broken words in which "the seething of the mind almost chokes the throat."¹⁰⁷ Calvin, in short, recognized that full appreciation of the Bible depends on reading it as literature.

This sensitivity to the literary virtues of Scripture also found expression in the intensity of his own responses to it and his empathy with biblical personages. Where the text told stories, he retold them, dramatizing the feelings and exploring the motives of their protagonists. When Mary rebuked the boy Jesus for his truancy, he apologized for her. "The weariness of three days was in that complaint," he explained.¹⁰⁸ The distress of the Hebrew spies hidden in the house of Rahab reminded him of anxieties he associated with a labyrinth. Once the gates of the city were closed, "their exit barred," with no hope of escape, the wretched men were trapped; they could only "call upon God."¹⁰⁹ He had to learn "from experience," like Moses, that the people entrusted to his care had closed the door against God and that they

were a "very heavy rock" for him to move. He knew empathetically that Moses would "willingly have withdrawn and turned his back" but could never reject "the burden of his vocation."¹¹⁰ He brought to the interpretation of Scripture the experiences and feelings of his own bitter life.

But his rhetorical Christianity is most profoundly apparent in his emphasis on Scripture as everywhere accommodated by God's decorum to human comprehension: God speaks to us of things "according to our capacity for understanding them, not according to what they are."¹¹¹ Taking into account "the diversity of times" and "diverse ways of learning," the Holy Spirit always accommodates itself to our infirmity."¹¹² This had strong egalitarian implications; it means that God "wants not only to instruct learned clergy [les grands clerics] and people who are very subtle and have been trained in school, but wishes to accommodate to even the roughest common people [les plus rudes idiots qui sovent]."¹¹³

Calvin distinguished, however, several rather different audiences for Scripture, and therefore different modes of accommodation. God has spoken through Moses and the prophets to an ancient and primitive people, and Christ had addressed his own contemporaries. But at the same time both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have been accommodated to peoples of later, more advanced ages.

The communication of God's word to its first rude audience, for Calvin, explained many otherwise puzzling biblical texts, especially those that seemed to deal with natural phenomena in unscientific ways. Such passages should be interpreted figuratively, figures being, Calvin thought, appropriate to the earliest stages of human culture,¹¹⁴ although the limits of his historicism are suggested by his inability to believe that such respected figures in the early history of the Jews as Moses and David could themselves have been simple men, whatever the character of their time. He perceived them as skilled orators, at least as cultivated as himself, who had deliberately condescended to the rudeness of their people. Moses, he explained, "did not speak acutely or in a philosophical way, but popularly, so that even the most uncultivated might understand." He had "deliberately abstained from subtle disputations that might smack of the schools and deeper learning." This explains why "he did not treat the stars scientifically, like a philosopher."¹¹⁵ David, in describing the sun as emerging from a tent, was not trying to teach "the secrets of astronomy" to "the rude and unlearned" but had deliberately chosen "a homely style."¹¹⁶ Calvin's sensitivity to "differences of times" implied that what is right for one age in the history of the church might be rejected by another. On this ground he rejected as "foolish" the continuance of the Jewish use of musical instruments in worship. He also thought perpetuation of the policy of the apostolic church generally inappropriate.¹¹⁷ But Calvin did not make explicit the most radical implication of this view: that the improvement of the church might take another form than return to origins.

He also noted repeatedly how Christ had accommodated his teaching to his own contemporaries. Although he did not equate the culture of this audience with that of the early Jews, he emphasized its simplicity in order to bring out the condescension of Christ's discourse. "In order to be more easily understood by the simple, he borrowed a way of speaking then customary among

his people.¹¹⁸ He "adapted his replies to those with whom he conversed... the person of the speaker and the question itself" could determine the Lord's reply.¹¹⁹ Sometimes he spoke imprecisely to "accommodate himself to his listeners."¹²⁰ At other times he used proverbs "then in common use," as Calvin often did in his own sermons.¹²¹ In general, Calvin observed, Scripture employs, for the sake of simple folk, metaphors that, taken literally, are misleading. To deepen reverence, it sometimes speaks of God "in heaven," although "God is by no means contained in heaven," because heaven "bears the mark and impression of God's glory and majesty." Scripture uses imagery to teach us, when we think of God, "to imagine nothing earthly" and "to adore him in all humility."¹²² In recognizing the decorum of Scripture, Calvin revealed a flexibility in exegesis not always conspicuous among his followers.

But God also accommodates his word to human beings in all ages, including the wisest and most cultivated. Otherwise it would be "impossible for God to make us feel his power [vertu] without annihilating and destroying us [nous abysmer du tout]."¹²³ If God "wished to speak his own language," Calvin asked, would mortal creatures have been able to bear it? Alas, no. How then has he spoken to us in Holy Scripture? He has stammered [bagayé]." He has presented himself "like a nurse who will not speak to a child in the same way as to a man but keeps in mind the child's capacity."¹²⁴ God must "descend to us so that we may mount to him."¹²⁵

Calvin's belief in God's accommodation of his word to human weakness in every age was central to his understanding of the Incarnation, as it had been for Valla and Erasmus. He believed, with Irenaeus, "that the Father, himself infinite, becomes finite in the Son, for he has accommodated himself to our little measure lest our minds be overwhelmed by the immensity of his glory."¹²⁶ Like Valla and Erasmus, too, he rendered Logos as sermo, God's "speech," oratio rather than ratio, rhetorical rather than philosophical discourse. "As 'speech' is said among men to be the image of the mind," Calvin observed, "so it is not inappropriate to apply this also to God and say that he expresses himself to us through his speech."¹²⁷ Rhetorical communication, he insisted repeatedly, is God's only way of revealing himself to human beings; we know nothing of God except through his revelation in Christ, who "represents and exhibits to us whatever is useful to be known about the Father."¹²⁸ This is why the sacrament in which Christ is present shows how "our merciful Lord, according to his infinite kindness, accommodates himself to our capacity."¹²⁹ In short, "whenever our mind seeks God, unless it meets Christ it will wander, restless and confused, until it wholly fails."¹³⁰

Thus Calvin never forgot, in his devotion to eruditio, the importance of persuasio; not only his sermons but also his Institutes and commentaries aimed at persuasion. The Institutes is not logically ordered; it consists of a series of overlapping topics generally following the order of the Apostles' Creed. This organization allowed Calvin the flexibility for a variety of persuasive strategies. His hortatory letter to the King of France establishes at the outset the rhetorical character of the work, and the text is throughout a complex mixture of demonstration, advocacy, and apologetic. As Quirinus Breen pointed out, the Institutes exploits numerous rhetorical devices in order to teach, to move, and to delight.¹³¹ Calvin's preliminary and, as the work grew, increasingly implausible, claim to brevity was itself a conventional

rhetorical move, intended here to suggest a contrast with scholastic prolixity.¹³²

Nor were Calvin's biblical commentaries simply works of erudition. They interpreted the text, to be sure, and often supplied information, philological, historical, geographical, or literary, drawn from his wide reading. But various responsibilities of an expositor of Scripture also called for persuasion. He was expected not only to elucidate its meaning but to adduce its relevance to a contemporary audience: as Calvin put it, "to apply to present use whatever instruction could be gathered from these divine compositions."¹³³ Since in Hebrew, as he knew, it was "the fashion to express in a word what might have been extended at length,"¹³⁴ he found it necessary at times to heighten its message with Erasmian copia. The destruction of Sodom, a catastrophe so laconically described in Scripture, called, Calvin thought, for "far more dignity of expression in tragic words." It was not enough for Moses simply to narrate "a judgement of God that no words would be sufficiently vehement to describe, and then leave the subject to the meditation of his readers;"¹³⁵ and Calvin took it on himself to remedy this defect. He also supplemented biblical narrative with persuasive "discourses," chiefly moral.

A central principle of humanist hermeneutics also made his commentaries rhetorical. Faithful exposition required a commentator, above all else, to identify the general conceptions [loci] underlying a text, to unify his commentary by showing the relation of particular passages to its main themes, and so constantly to reiterate its essential message.¹³⁶ As a vehicle of general interpretation, a commentary was thus inevitably persuasive as well as demonstrative.

The significance of the message also precluded dispassionate presentation, and Calvin was prepared to introduce, into his commentaries and Institutes alike, anything that might increase their impact: digression, repetition, embellishment, amplification, and passages of great emotional intensity. He would have considered the coolness and detachment of mere scholarship profoundly unsuited to his purposes; he aspired - to use his own language - to be hot, not cool. He wanted all his discourse to be as powerful as possible. But this requirement applied above all to his sermons.

Calvin never forgot that the effect of a sermon depends on a collaboration between the preacher and the Holy Spirit. But he also attached great importance to natural talent and human training; effective preaching required "a combination of the right understanding of Scripture" and "a special gift for explaining it."¹³⁷ For Calvin,

It is not enough for a man to be eminent in profound learning if he has no talent for teaching [i.e., preaching]. There are many who, either because of defective speaking or insufficient mental ability, or because they are not sufficiently in touch with ordinary people, keep their knowledge shut up within themselves. Such people ought, as the saying goes, to sing to themselves and the muses - and go and do something else.¹³⁸

Yet his apologetic tone in discussing "eloquence" in the pulpit sometimes suggests persistent doubts of its propriety. If it is not to "contravene the

simplicity of the Gospel," it must "not only submit and willingly subordinate itself (to the Gospel) but also serve it as a maidservant her mistress." Yet when it does so, it is - the mixed figure is a bit jarring - "like a trumpet" that compels human beings to listen.¹³⁹

The awesome responsibility for the salvation of souls and the urgency of the task make decorum especially important in preaching. "The doctors of the church should be taught by long meditation so that, as need arises," Calvin believed, "they may minister doctrine to the church from God's word, as from a storehouse, wisely and aptly accommodating the teaching to the grasp of each individual."¹⁴⁰ A preacher must "pay attention to the persons to whom the teaching is addressed," continually reminding himself, "I am not at all here for myself alone... If I were content with feeding only myself and had no regard for you and your capacities for making use of the teaching I bring, what would be the sense of that."¹⁴¹ Preaching, like consolation, is medicinal:

It is as if one went to a doctor and asked him for a remedy for an illness, and he discoursed of his art in general and argued about it, and the poor sick man died... It is necessary to adapt the medicine to those who need it.¹⁴²

But Calvin's concern to combine responsible and scholarly interpretation - eruditio - with a discourse that would move the hearts of his listeners - persuasio - was not altogether successful. A sermon that is itself, like Calvin's sermons, a close consideration of a sequence of biblical verses can hardly fail to keep any rhetorical flight short and close to the ground. There are eloquent passages in Calvin's sermons, but, fearful, perhaps of losing control over himself, and relying on Scripture as a bridle, he composed few eloquent sermons.

NOTES

1. This paper is part of a chapter from a book, now nearing completion, entitled John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait, in which I am trying to bring Calvin back to life by putting him back in the century in which he was alive. Calvin, I argue, was a typical sixteenth-century intellectual, and the richness and power of his thought came not from the systematic rigor attributed to him after his death, but from the rich eclecticism, the variety, and the tensions of Renaissance culture. Earlier chapters in the book examine the philosophical elements in Calvin's thought. Later chapters explore the meaning of his humanism for his understanding of human being, the possibilities of human knowledge, power, the drama of human existence, and life in society. The phrase "theologia rhetorica" was coined by Charles Trinkaus to describe the religious thought of Renaissance humanism in In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought (Chicago, 1970).
2. Inst., I, viii, 1. For his knowledge of ancient rhetoric, see Battles's introduction to comm. Sen., 76-84.
3. Comm. I Cor. 12:12.
4. Comm. Matt. 27:45.
5. Comm. Gen. 22:11.
6. Comm. Sen., 91.
7. Quintilian, Inst. or., I, vi, 45.
8. Serm. no. 13 on I Cor., col. 744.
9. Comm. Gen. 14:1; cf. Luchesius Smits, Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Jean Calvin (Louvain, 1957), p. 249.
10. Comms. Jer. 5:15, 9:5.
11. Serm. no. 56 on Job, col. 705. For Erasmus on the point, see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology (Toronto, 1977), p. 54.
12. Comm. Jer. 5:15.
13. Comm. Ezek. 1:24. Cf. Pontano: "Speech is the administrator of all those things which, conceived in the mind and activated by thinking, are dragged forth into the public world" (quoted by Charles Trinkaus, The Scope of Renaissance Humanism (Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 366.
14. Comm. Jer. 18:11.
15. Comm. Ps. 45:2.
16. Comm. I Cor. 2:11; comm. Matt. 12:34; serm. no. 33 on Deut., col. 275; serm. no. 40 on Deut., col. 369; comm. John 1:1.

17. Comm. Ps. 81:5. In comm. Ezek. 2:3 he observed that "those in exile inevitably contract many faults of language."
18. Boyle, Language and Method, p. 44.
19. Comm. I Cor. 3:2.
20. Comm. Matt. 3:7.
21. Serm. no. 78 on Job, col. 206. Consolation was a traditional concern of rhetoricians.
22. Comm. Lam. 1:2.
23. Serm. no. 62 on Job, col. 5.
24. De vera participatione carnis et sanguinis Christi in sacra coena, CO IX, col. 514.
25. Comm. Ex. 4:11.
26. Comm. Gal. 3:24. That Calvin, in the plural altioribus disciplinis included dialectic is unlikely; we speak of a polished rhetorician but not of a polished logician.
27. Comm. I Cor. 1:17.
28. Comm. I Thess. 1:4.
29. Comm. Ex. 31:18.
30. Cf. Ronald Levao, Renaissance Minds and their Fictions: Cusanus, Sidney, Shakespeare (Berkeley, 1985).
31. On this aspect of humanism see now Salvatore Camporeale, "Lorenzo Valla tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: Encomion s. Thomas - 1457," Memorie Domenicane, n.s., 7(1976):1-141; and "Umanesimo e teologia tra '400 e '500," Memorie Domenicane, n.s., 8-9(1977-78):412-36.
32. Cf. Theodor E. Mommsen, "Petrarch's Conception of the 'Dark Ages,'" Speculum, 17(1942):226-42.
33. Cf. Thomas M. Greene, Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry (New Haven, 1982), pp. 81-104.
34. Comm. I Cor. 14:5.
35. Cf. Inst., IV, xix, 36.
36. Smits, Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Calvin, pp. 191-202; T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries (London, 1971), pp. 147-50; Ford Lewis Battles, comm. Sen., pp. 63-71, pp. 118-24; Francois Wendel, Calvin: The

Origins and Development of his Religious Thought, tr. Philip Mairet (London, 1963), p. 31.

37. Cf. B. Girardin, Rhétorique et théologique: Calvin, le Commentaire de l'Épître aux Romains (Paris, 1979), pp. 176-80.
38. Cf. comm. John 11:1, on the identification of the village of Lazarus and his sisters as a "castellum."
39. Comm. Dan. 7:7, concerning a mistake in listing the provinces of the Empire.
40. Comm. Dan. 5:1.
41. Inst., IV, xvi, 12.
42. Comm. Rom., ep. On the general point, see Smits, Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Calvin, p. 246.
43. Inst., IV, xix, 12.
44. Comm Is. 14:12.
45. Cf. with Eusebius's commendation of Theophilus in Erasmus's Convivium religiosum: "You explain the matter very well by comparing passages, an excellent method of biblical study" in The Colloquies of Erasmus, tr. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago, 1965), p. 61.
46. An exception, as Jean Rutenburg has pointed out to me, was his Jewish sources, which, with the exception of Josephus, he tended to lump together as "the Jews," as in his Genesis commentary.
47. Smits, Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Calvin, pp. 237-9, 250-51, 186-90.
48. Comm. Gen. 11:1. He would have known of Berosus through Josephus; an account of the period after the flood attributed to Berosus (but in fact invented by Annianus of Viterbo) had also been included in a collection of "lost works," probably known to Calvin, entitled Antiquitatum variarum volumina XVII cum commentariis (Rome, 1498, and frequently reprinted).
49. Comm. Ps. 89:9; cf. comm. Is. 14:12.
50. Acta Synodi Tridentinae cum antidotum, CO VII, cols. 416, 111. Calvin often noted errors in the Vulgate, as in Inst., III, ii, 38; III, iv, 9; III, xv, 4; but as Parker observes in Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, pp. 143-45, he often used the Vulgate himself, preferring it to the New Testament of Erasmus. In comm. Acts 26:28 he cited a reading of Valla. He was reticent about his own indebtedness to Erasmus, but he made extensive use of Erasmus's Annotationes; cf. Parker, pp. 129-42.
51. Serm. on John 1:1-5, col. 465.
52. Antidotum, CO VII, col. 414.

53. Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," Interpretation 21(1977):8.
54. Commentarius in harmoniam evangelicam, ep.; but cf. comm. Rom., ep. where he criticized Bucer's verbosity.
55. Letter to Viret, May 19, 1540, CO XI, col. 36.
56. Comm. Rom., ep.
57. Comm. Rom., ep.
58. Cf. Parker, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, p. 88.
59. Comm. Rom., ep.
60. Cf. Ford Lewis Battles, "The Future of Calviniana," Renaissance - Reformation - Resurgence, ed. Peter de Klerk (Grand Rapids, 1976), p. 143. Calvin wrote a preface for a proposed French edition of Chrysostom, in CO IX, cols. 831-38. For earlier humanist interest, cf. Charles L. Stinger, The Renaissance in Rome (Bloomington, 1985), pp. 169-70, 233-34.
61. Comm. I Cor. 3:15. Jerome is significantly absent from Calvin's list; for his scorn for Jerome, cf. comm. Ezek., 4:4-8. Calvin may have been repelled by Jerome because of his association with the Vulgate, but he may also have deplored the Renaissance cult of Jerome as ascetic desert saint; cf. Eugene F. Rice, Jr., Saint Jerome in the Renaissance (Baltimore, 1985). For Calvin's use of Bernard, see now Jill Raitt, "Calvin's Use of Bernard of Clairvaux," Archiv fuer Reformationsgeschichte 72(1981):98-121.
62. Comm. Ps. 89:9.
63. Comm. Matt. 13:55.
64. Comms. II Cor. 12:8, Dan. 7:7, Gen. 31:5.
65. Comm. Gen., Argumentum. In comm. Jer. 36:1-2 he reflected on the advantages of written over oral testimony.
66. Comms. Jer. 35:1-7, 5:3; Is. 22:9.
67. Comm. I Tim. 5:23.
68. Comm. John 8:3.
69. Comms. Jer. 5:3, Is. 53:1.
70. Comm. II Cor. 4:6.
71. Comm. Ps. 89:9; cf. comm. Jude 14.
72. Comm. Rom., ep.

73. Comm. Matt. 4:5.
74. Comm. Gen. 10:1.
75. Inst., IV, ix, 14. This may also reflect his reserve about the Book of Revelation; cf. Parker, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, pp. 76-77. Again he may have been following Erasmus, who omitted only this from his New Testament paraphrases.
76. Comm. Matt. 2:1.
77. Comm. Matt. 27:45.
78. Comm. Is. 58:5.
79. Comm. Is. 15:2-3.
80. Comm. Is. 58:5.
81. Comm. I Cor. 11:12.
82. Serm. no. 32 on II Sam., 280-81; cf. serm. no. 10 on II Sam., 86.
83. Serm. no. 18 on II Sam., 155.
84. Comm. John, Argumentum.
85. Comm. Matt. 4:5.
86. Comm. Matt. 2:1.
87. Comm. Matt. 6:24. Calvin applied the same principle to the Pentateuch.
88. Comm. Luke 8:19; cf. comm. Dan. 7:12, for similar problems in the Hebrew Scriptures.
89. Traité des scandales, in Oeuvres de Jean Calvin, ed. Albert-Marie Schmidt (Paris, 1934), II, 165-6; this observation is imbedded, however, in a passage otherwise ambivalent on the point.
90. Cf. comm. Is. 5:1; the "noble and sonorous" song of Isaiah beginning "let me sing for my beloved" moved him to remark generally that "the greatest art goes into the composition of poetry."
91. Comm. Phil. 3:1; this may suggest that he generally associated jesting with coarseness.
92. Comm. Is. 51:19.
93. Serm. no. 41 on II Sam., 359.
94. As in serm. on John 1:1-5, col. 478.

95. Comm. Gal. 4:22.
96. Inst., II, v, 19.
97. Comm. II Cor. 3:6-7.
98. Comm. Gal. 4:22; cf. comm. II Cor. 3:6.
99. Comm. Matt. 13:10.
100. Comm. Matt. 3:16; cf. Inst., IV, xvii, 20-12.
101. Comms. Matt. 25:41; II Thess. 1:7. Again he was following Erasmus; cf. Lucien Febvre, Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle: la religion de Rabelais (Paris, 1944), p. 255.
102. Comm. Jer. 49:3; see also comms. Jer. 46:3-5 and Is. 34:4.
103. Comm. Acts 26:23.
104. Comm. Jer. 31:15-16; cf. comm. Matt. 2:18.
105. Comm. Jer. 50:19.
106. Sermon on John 1:1-5, cols. 467-8.
107. Comm. Gal. 4:19.
108. Comm. Luke 2:48.
109. Comm. Josh. 2:7.
110. Comm. Ex. 6:10.
111. Sermon no. 34 on Job, col. 423; on the general point, cf. Battles, "God was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," Interpretation 31(1977): 19-38.
112. Inst., IV, viii, 5; sermon on John 1:1-5.
113. Sermon no. 4 on Job, col. 63.
114. Here he followed an ancient tradition eventually resurrected by Vico; cf. the introduction by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch to The New Science of Giambattista Vico (Ithaca, 1968), pp. xxxix-xli.
115. Comm. Gen. 2:10, 6:14; see also comms. Gen. 1:14 and 3:1, Ex. 7:8.
116. Comm. Ps. 19:4; cf. comm. Ps. 135:7, 114:5.
117. Comm. Ps. 149:2; Inst., IV, iii, 4.
118. Comm. Matt. 18:16.

119. Inst., III, xviii, 9.
120. Comm. Matt. 12:5.
121. Comm. Matt. 7:16.
122. Serm. no. 85 on Job, cols. 294-95.
123. Serm. no. 43 on Deut., col. 396.
124. Serm. no. 42 on Deut., col. 387; cf. serm. no. 16 on II Sam., 134-5 and Inst., I, xiii, 1.
125. Serm. no. 16 on II Sam., 135-36.
126. Inst., II, vi, 4.
127. Comm. John 1:1. On Valla, cf. Donald R. Kelley, Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance (New York, 1970), p. 28, citing Dialecticae disputationes, I, 9; for Erasmus, cf. Boyle, Language and Method, pp. 3-31.
128. Comm. I John 2:22. But cf. serm. no. 45 on Deut., col. 429, and Inst., IV, viii, 7, which represent Christ as only perfecting a knowledge more obscurely available elsewhere.
129. Inst., IV, xiv, 3; cf. serm. no. 1 on I Cor., cols. 585-86.
130. Comm. I Pet. 1:3; cf. Inst., III, ii, 1.
131. "John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition," Church History 26(1957):3-21.
132. Inst., III, vi, 1. On perspicua brevitatis as rhetoric, cf. Quintilian, IV, i, 34: "We shall also find it a useful device for wakening the attention of our audience to create the impression that we shall not keep them long and intend to stick closely to the point."
133. Comm. Ps., pref.
134. Serm. no. 56 on Job, col. 697.
135. Comm. Gen. 19:24; for Erasmus, cf. Boyle, Language and Method, p. 11.
136. Parker, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, p. 33.
137. Comm. Rom. 12:6.
138. Comm. I Tim. 3:2. On the general point see Rodolphe Peter, "Rhétorique et prédication selon Calvin," Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses 55(1975):249-72.

139. Comm. I Cor. 1:17.

140. Comm. Matt. 13:5.

141. Serm. no. 95 on Job, cols. 419-20, 424.

142. Serms. no 95 on Job, col. 424 and no. 49, col. 609.

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RHETORICAL THEOLOGY: CHARITY SEEKING CHARITY

The religious piety of the humanists secured its perfect complement in rhetorical propriety. Such piety had established a tradition, from the Delphic wisdom of the ancients to the filial fear of the medievals, of the knowledge of self as creature, distinct from and lesser than God.¹ It shunned the irreverent curiosity which sought knowledge beyond the human measure and cultivated a reverent curiosity which promoted such mortal knowledge as might illuminate the divine revelation. It was a studied ignorance. Knowledge was not the end of humanist theology but a means to it. Those disciplines, notably grammar, which could interpret Scripture and tradition were assiduously applied. Implicit in this scholarship of editing and translating, of annotating and paraphrasing, was the belief that in reading or hearing the word of God not only by sensory impression but also by volitional assent the soul was conformed to that very Word in whom it had been uttered into being (John 1:1-3).² For this conformity the integrity of the text was essential. The humanists were thus zealous for erudition, but an erudition in the service of persuasion.

In persuasion humanist theology was governed by the rhetorical canon of decorum, which dictated attention to the subject and audience of the discourse.³ As theology was speech about God to mortals, a creaturely measure was to be observed. In expounding this propriety the humanists appealed to the piety of the very Son made man. Erasmus speculated that Christ spoke rhetorically to reveal and to conceal. He accommodated the divine truth to a universal understanding in tropes that were simple, not sophisticated, available to all, whether illiterate shepherds or literate scribes.⁴ As he was neatly paraphrased by Calvin, God stammers to human infancy as a mother to her babe.⁵ This rhetorical method also sequestered the divine truth, since it could only be comprehended by the volitional assent of faith. It thus judged men, separating the faithful from the faithless listeners, the shepherds from the scribes.⁶ Erasmus not only regarded Christ as speaker but revered Christ as Speech. The revelation that had been dispensed to the Jews through law and to the Greeks through philosophy was manifest to Christians as discourse.⁷ This Logos was not the discrete utterance of the Vulgate rendition of verbum, but the copious oratory of his own New Testament translation of sermo.⁸ In imitating this paradigm the theologian was himself to be a rhetor, for the human complement to the divine generation was speech. Since man was created in the image of the Son as the eternally begotten discourse of the Father, it was speech, not reason, which distinguished him from beast. The Christian theologian was therefore to be a rhetorician not a logician. This vocation distinguished the humanists from the scholastics (whom Erasmus allied with the animals) in a methodological shift from inquiry to eloquence, from the dialectical question to the rhetorical period.⁹

In this exposition of the rhetoric of Christ and Christ as Rhetoric, another truth was inchoate, one whose exploration discloses the theological distinction between humanism and scholasticism. Christ spoke rhetorically because rhetoric is the language of the Holy Spirit, which he possessed in his

mission. He breathed this Spirit upon men in exhorting, consoling, instructing, admonishing, convicting, exciting their wills toward assent. "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). It is this same inspiration of the Spirit in Scripture, as extending the spiration of the Spirit in the Trinity, that quickens its letter to life: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). It was from this divine inspiration that humanists like Petrarch, Erasmus, and Calvin received the Pentecostal spark that was their own genius. As Erasmus formulated the rhetorical program, "The special goal of theologians is to expound Scripture wisely; to render its doctrine according to faith, not frivolous questions; to discourse about piety gravely and efficaciously; to wring out tears, to inflame spirits to heavenly things."¹⁰

Rhetoric was not only pious but also pastoral, not merely appropriate toward God but very persuasive toward men. This distinguished it from the dialectic which the scholastics adopted as their method: rhetoric had an efficacy not only to convince but also to convert. Dialectic seeks an act of the intellect, judgement, and secures its religious end in contemplation. Rhetoric seeks an act of the will, assent, and secures its religious end in conversion.¹¹ It was such conversion that Erasmus defined as the end of theology. The theologian had one focus only, to speak metamorphically, transfiguring man into God. "This is your first and only goal; perform this vow, this one thing," he instructed, "that you be changed, that you be seized, that you weep at and be transformed into those teachings which you learn." The program was the transformation of speech into act, of oratory into flesh, just as Speech had become incarnate.¹²

A particular efficacy of rhetoric toward this transformation defines it as the language of the Spirit which Christ spoke. Rhetoric is unitive. So is the Spirit. It is the Spirit who as the mutual love of the Father and the Son is the bond of the Trinity, and as their missionary love toward men is the bond of creation. To speak rhetorically then is to speak spiritually. The humanists appreciated the unitive power of rhetoric in three spheres: the bond of society, the integration of self, and communion with God. Rhetoric as the bond of society was indebted to the classical tradition which lauded speech as the cultural act. It distinguished man from beast and enabled him to found cities, establish laws, invent arts, and live the good life socially. It was communication for commonweal.¹³ This social empathy was paralleled by a personal sympathy, indebted to the classical tradition which commended speech as the psychological act. By the education and therapy of speech a man could civilize himself, establishing law among his own unruly members, fashioning a personality, and living the good life individually. This was communication for integrity.¹⁴ As a humanist exemplar, Erasmus united these social and individual goals of discourse in his methodological masterwork *Diatriba*, by which he sought through deliberative rhetoric to bind the fracture of Europe and the fault of Luther.¹⁵ Yet there was also speech as a theological act. Rhetoric had a power to foster - although not effect, effect being the verb of grace alone - a communion with God that secured the religious and theological ends of speech. Its religious end was that conversion to God by moral acts to which the will was persuaded. Its theological end was that union with God by

mystical passions to which the will was enraptured. The ultimate conversion toward which rhetorical theology tended was that charitable union, and it is such transformation of the self in God which distinguishes its purpose from that of dialectical theology.

Dialectic seeks an act of the intellect, judgement, and secures its religious end in contemplation. Contemplation involves understanding, the apprehension of God, and wisdom, the right judgement of that apprehension. These are virtues of the speculative intellect and, superiorly, charismatic gifts.¹⁶ The scholastic definition of theology was the formulation of Anselm: "faith seeking understanding."¹⁷ Faith is a theological virtue and it resides in the intellect.¹⁸ In scholasticism it seeks a virtue of the speculative intellect, understanding, and also understanding as a charismatic gift. Its speculative and charismatic crown is wisdom, by which it rightly judges what it understands. In the scholastic definition of theology, then, a theological virtue seeks a charismatic gift. In the humanist definition of theology, however, a theological virtue seeks a theological virtue, its proper perfection. Rhetoric seeks an act of the will, assent, and secures its religious end in conversion. Conversion involves charity alone. Charity is a theological virtue and it resides in the will. It is the consummate virtue and as such may only seek its own increase.¹⁹ Here is the definitional shift from scholasticism to humanism in theology: from faith seeking understanding to charity seeking charity. It is paralleled by a psychological shift from the intellectual to the volitional, from the speculative to the experimental. The humanist reform of theology was indeed, as it eagerly acknowledged its imitation of the ancient method, a renaissance of the patristic tradition. It was, however, also what it eschewed to acknowledge, a continuity with the medieval tradition of those mystical theologians from Bernard to Bonaventure and beyond who identified human excellence with the will rather than the intellect and who, not fortuitously, wrote rhetorically rather than dialectically about God.

The aspiration of scholastic theology may thus be convicted out of its own mouth by this simple consideration of the treatise on the habits in the Summa theologiae of Thomas Aquinas, whom the best of the humanists, Erasmus, considered the best of the moderns.²⁰ It clearly established the excellence of charity with its unitive end to faith with its contemplative end. Had Thomas comprehended his own argument, its logic would have compelled him to rhetoric. Although he did not abandon his project, he was constrained upon its completion to judge it rhetorically with one of those tropes he so disdained, a mere metaphor: straw. This heap of knowledge was not in the judgement of the humanists any kindling for the fire of charity. It was damp straw which emitted smoke - obfuscation - and quenched the very flame. Lorenzo Valla assigned Aquinas to play the cymbals in the heavenly choir²¹ because, as Paul declaimed, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). The humanists aspired to more than mortal or angelic voice: the breath of the Spirit: tongues of fire. As Erasmus encouraged theologians, God babbles to our infancy and we babble back; yet just as he stoops to human incompetence so should men mount to divine sublimity.²²

This sublimity toward which the humanists ascended was the consummation of

charity in mystical union. In this supernatural mission the Spirit perfects in the soul through the will by grace, an experimental infusion of himself as Charity, the spiritual union that participates by adoption in the essential unity that exists by nature between the Father and the Son.²³ This is utterly distinct from and utterly transcendent of the scholastic goal of contemplation, which completes the different and lesser theological virtue of faith. In contemplation there is only the quasi-union of the knower in the known, not the real union of the lover in the beloved. The union of charitable mysticism is, moreover, not knowing but unknowing. In the disavowal of John of the Cross, "Nescivi. Then I knew naught."²⁴ This is so because, as Thomas understood, the object of charity cannot be knowledge because its object is the thing known, which is God himself.²⁵ There is an unknowing also in contemplative mysticism, but of a different nature. In contemplative mysticism the unknowing represents the failure of the speculative intellect, even as aided by the gift of understanding, to apprehend fully its object. In charitable mysticism the intellect is not even operative, or operated. The difference is as between a clouded vision and no vision, the purblind and the blind. ("Love is blind.") The befogged vision of contemplation - its unknowing - will yield in glory to manifest sight, "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). The non-vision of charity - its unknowing - will increase in glory to its own perfection in an eternal union, not the externality of facial regard but the internality of the self in God.

Theologically this justifies the claims of the humanists to superiority over the scholastics and explains the endurance of their method into the modern era, while scholasticism declined and ended as an historical episode. While it is true that those scholastics who were religiously minded sought contemplation for charity, understanding in order to love, that end was merely on the horizon of theology, not integral to its definition. That charitable vision was obscured in the frigid and frivolous investigations which the humanists lampooned, as in the question as to whether God could have become incarnate in a beetle's asshole.²⁶ The scholastic method toward charity was, moreover, itself awry. The union of charitable mysticism does presuppose the perfection of the charismatic gifts, among them the contemplative graces of understanding and wisdom. The last of the charismatic gifts to be perfected on the threshold of the "mystical marriage," as the experience of John of the Cross attests, however, it is not wisdom but fear, filial fear. It is the solitary attachment of the will to God in poverty of spirit that ushers the kingdom of God by grace within, the Beloved into his chamber.²⁷ The humanists in their observance of fear through rhetorical propriety were thus more proximate to charitable union than were the scholastics in their cultivation of wisdom through dialectical certitude. Thus they gleefully declined the sage's crown for the fool's cap (and foolscap). One had to be, as Erasmus knew, a fool to play the rhetorician at theology. As Jacopone de Benedetti da Todi had mystically rhymed:

He who enters in this school
Learns a new and wondrous rule:
"Who hath never been a fool,
Wisdom's scholar cannot be."²⁸

Erasmus was confident that in his folly he initiated the Fool who had blessed such simplicity: "I thank you, heavenly Father, that you have hidden these mysteries from the wise and revealed them to the fools."²⁹

It may seem that the fear of the humanists was not proximate to the charity of the mystics, as the rhetoric of mysticism appears to violate the canon of decorum. The rhetoric of charitable mysticism does not ruin decorum, however, but extend it. As charity increases, the understanding and judgement of what is fitting to speak about God becomes extravagant. Bernard of Clairvaux explained that because the reason for loving God is God himself, the way to love him is beyond measure.³⁰ Thus the way to speak of him in love is beyond measure. This exaggeration of language is evident in the mystical predilection for hyperbole and exclamation and for the imagery of eroticism and intoxication, as in the commentaries on the Song of Songs. To the religious mind such language seems indecent. Its rhetorical resorts offend the lesser love of filial piety which regards the honor of God. This is spousal love speaking, however, and fittingly so, for it expresses an intimacy which exceeds the creaturely measure, which is filial fear. "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). The abandonment of self in God thus secures its perfect complement in an abandon of rhetoric. This union is ineffable, yet when flung back from spiritual to sensible reality the stunned tongue does loosen and speak, and not in a dialectical syllogism but in a rhetorical sentence. This rhetoric marks the failure of language to represent, not only because divine omniscience transcends human science but also because the experience itself is not cognitive: unknowing. This rhetoric marks, however, the success of language to evoke, its consummate perfection which is to speak charitably about Charity.

The rejection of rhetoric as the proper theological method belies a servile fear, the fear of punishment, of damnation, which error and sin provoke. Theologians in the grip of this mercenary fear preferred the mathematical equation to the mystical union as a model for discourse. As Augustine confessed of his refusal before conversion to assent, he desired to be as certain of the divine mysteries as he was of the fact that three plus seven equals ten.³¹ It was with such demand for apodictic evidence, absolute certitude (because if one does not know, he cannot believe, and if he disbelieves, he cannot be saved), that Martin Luther grasped the kataleptic impression of justification by faith and clenched Zeno's fist around a dogma of absolute necessity.³² He composed his masterwork, De servo arbitrio, in the forensic genre to condemn rhetoric itself as a theological method.³³ It was not fortuitous that Luther opted for ordinary language and literal sense as normative in theology.³⁴ He elected this rational method in rejection of the counsel of his confessor to take refuge in the wounds of Christ,³⁵ the mystical resolution to the anxiety about salvation which servile fear engendered.³⁶ There were two common cures in the sixteenth century for servile fear. They were classical therapies well established in medical theory with counterparts in the philosophical solutions to the epistemological problem of the criterion: Stoic clarity and Skeptic suspension.³⁷ In the question of free will, for example, Luther asserted Stoically for personal knowledge, while Erasmus deliberated Skeptically for consensual versimilitude.³⁸ In the question of religious experience, for another example, Ignatius of Loyola formulated rules for the discernment and judgement of spirits, while John of the Cross advised oblivion and abandonment of them.³⁹

Dialectic and rhetoric, certitude and plenitude, coercion and persuasion, the grip of logic and the lapse of love - these were the fundamental options which confronted John Calvin at the historical fork between the via moderna and

the via antiqua in theology. Rhetoric is indeed, as many theologians feared, risky and messy. One might be burnt; one might be caught. The creative act may entail fault. Yet did not the original Creator risk the mess of the Original Sin, then redeem it in divine charity? It was this spiritual generosity which found its methodological complement in the "open hand" of rhetoric.⁴⁰ By humanist conviction, God could not be bound by the knots of logic, yet he might be lured into the nets of love:

Your head is held high like Carmel
and its plaits are as dark as purple;
a king is held captive in your tresses
(Song of Songs 7:6).

So it was that the mystic theologian John of the Cross found Christ entangled in his hair:

By that hair alone
Which thou regardest fluttering on my neck
Beholding it upon my neck, thou wert captivated.⁴¹

So it was that the poetic theologian Petrarch found himself entangled in Laura's hair:

Nor can I shake loose that lovely knot by which the sun is surpassed,
not to say amber or gold: I mean the blond locks and the curling
snare that so softly bind tight my soul, which I arm with humility
and nothing else.⁴²

This was the classical symbol of ecstatic seizure, the tossing back of long hair in the wind, as when possessed Cassandra "flings her golden locks when there blows from the God the compelling wind of second sight."⁴³ The strand was one history. The perennial problem with enthusiasm was: which spirit speaks? good or evil? Rhetoric to be virtuous must attain its proper end, the good; theologically, the Good who is the Spirit. In the crisis of the sixteenth century over conflicting claims to that Spirit, Erasmus formulated the perfect rule. The presence of the Spirit is discerned by himself alone - charity - and until that charity be manifest, the prudence of Gamaliel is to be practiced. If disunity rather than unity results from discourse, then the "rhetoric" is bedevilled sophistry.⁴⁴

To imagine John Calvin in his tidy cap as a theologian with his hair let down confronts the stereotype. Perhaps it is only odd to prop up his sagging tomes between the exclamation of two French mystics:

Charity! give me charity!⁴⁵

and

FIRE.⁴⁶

Yet, "he aspired - to use his own language - to be hot, not cool" (p. 12). It was not only the classical tradition of rhetorical eloquence but also the Christian tradition of charitable mysticism which explains in origin and

destiny the theological method and Scriptural hermeneutics of humanism. Although Calvin may have been short of eloquence and shy of mysticism, in his choice of the via antiqua rather than the via moderna he was on the right road, like the author of the psalms he cherished, a pilgrim with the song of the ascents.

NOTES

1. For the classical background see Jean Defrades, Les themes de la propagande delphique (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1954), pp. 277-80, 284, 286; and for its Christian version, Pierre Courcelle, Connais-toi, toi-même de Socrate à Saint Bernard, 3 vols. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1974-75). For the degree of love see Bernard of Clairvaux, De diligendo Deo 8-10; and for servile and filial fear, Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, II-II, q. 7, art. 1; q. 19.
2. This parallels the mystical doctrine of the restoration of the image of God in the soul as propounded by the Cistercian Masters Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry and as originating in neo-Platonist philosophy.
3. See my Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 48-51; and Rhetoric and Reform: Erasmus' Civil Dispute with Luther (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 39-40.
4. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology, pp. 117-27.
5. Ibid., pp. 44-45; cf. William J. Bouwsma, "Calvinism as Theologia Rhetorica," p. 11.
6. Rhetoric and Reform, p. 37.
7. Christening Pagan Mysteries: Erasmus in Pursuit of Wisdom (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 15-23.
8. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology, pp. 3-31; "Sermo: Reopening the Conversation on Translating Jn 1,1," Vigiliae Christianae 31(1977): 161-68, with Calvin, 161.
9. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology.
10. Ibid., p. 73.
11. "Fools and Schools: Scholastic Dialectic, Humanist Rhetoric; from Anselm to Erasmus," Medievalia et Humanistica, n.s., 13(1985): 183.
12. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology, p. 73.
13. Ibid., pp. 53-55.
14. Ibid., pp. 39-48.
15. Rhetoric and Reform, pp. 14-17, 99-131.

16. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I, q. 68, art. 4; II-II, q. 8, q. 45.
17. Anselm of Canterbury, Proslogion 1.
18. Thomas Aquinas, ST, II-II, q. 4, art. 2.
19. ST, I, q. 66, art. 6, q. 67, art. 6; II-II, q. 23, art. 6, q. 24, art. 4, 9.
20. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology, p. 206, n. 43; J.-P. Massaut, "Erasme et Saint Thomas," in Colloquia Erasiana Turonensia: Stage internationale d'études humanistes 12e, Tours, 1969, ed. Jean-Claude Margolin, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1972), 2: 581-611.
21. Salvatore I. Camporeale, "Lorenzo Valla tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: Encomion s. Thomae - 1457," Memorie Domenicane 7(1976).
22. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology, pp. 44-45.
23. This definition is indebted for its basic insight to William of St. Thierry who writes that the Spirit effects in the soul by grace the same union that exists by nature between the Father and the Son. Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei 263. This is repeated by John of the Cross who better distinguishes between union and unity in Cantico espiritual 39.3-5. As their formulation does not distinguish between mystical union and any other infusion of charity further clarifications have seemed necessary. The definition includes both degrees: the lesser union which is conferred in the body in repetition as a ravishment and penetration of exquisite delicacy; and the consummate union which is conferred in ecstasy once only as an effacement and transformation of tremendous dynamism.
24. John of the Cross, Cantico espiritual 26.13-17; trans., E. Allison Peers, Spiritual Canticle, 3rd rev. ed. (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1961), p. 396.
25. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I, q. 67, art. 6 ad 2.
26. Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology, pp. 54-56; "Fools and Schools," pp. 173-95.
27. John of the Cross, Cantico espiritual 26.3-4; cf. Thomas Aquinas, ST, II-II, q. 19, art. 9, 12.
28. Jacopone da Todi, Laude 87.15-18; trans., Evelyn Underhill, Jacopone da Todi (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1919), p. 283.
29. In his gloss of Matt. 11:25 in the Moria (1511 and 1514 eds.) Erasmus altered the Vulgate rendition of parvuli to stulti. Similarly in his first edition of the New Testament (1516) he rendered nēpioi by stulti (LB VI, 62E, 274E). For the controversy over this philology with Diego Lopez Zuñiga, an editor of the Complutensian Polygot Bible, see Apologia respondens ad ea quae in Novo Testamento taxaverat Jacobus Lopis Stunica, ad. loc. See also his Paraphrasis in evangelium Matthei 11:25.

30. Bernard of Clairvaux, De diligendo Deo 1; cf. ST, II-II, q. 27, art. 6.
31. Augustine, Confessionum libri tredecim 6.4.6.
32. "Stoic Luther: Paradoxical Sin and Necessity," Archiv fuer Reformationsgeschichte, 73(1982): 69-93; Rhetoric and Reform, pp. 47-57.
33. Rhetoric and Reform, pp. 58-98.
34. "The Chimera and the Spirit: Luther's Grammar of the Will," in The Martin Luther Quincentennial, ed. Gerhard Duennhaupt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), pp. 17-31.
35. For their relationship see David Steinmetz, Luther and Staupitz: An Essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation (Durham: Duke University Press, 1980).
36. For an example of this mystical commonplace see Bonaventure, De perfectionae vitae ad sorores 6.2.
37. For the classical background see the literature cited in Rhetoric and Reform, p. 178, n. 22, and also the discussion, pp. 117-126.
38. Rhetoric and Reform, pp. 5-98.
39. Ignatius of Loyola, Exercitia spiritualia 1, 314-36, and for his alliance with scholasticism against humanism in 410-11 see my "Angels Black and White: Loyola's Spiritual Discernment in Historical Perspective," Theological Studies, 44(1983): 253-54; John of the Cross, El subido del Monte Carmelo 2-3.
40. For this classical metaphor see Cicero, Orator 32.113; Rhetoric and Reform, pp. 81-82.
41. John of the Cross, Cantico espiritual 31; trans., Peers, p. 432.
42. Petrarch, Rime sparse 197.7-11; trans., Robert M. Durling, Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 343. Although this conceit is interpreted censoriously in literary criticism, for a theological appreciation of it and of Petrarch's aesthetics consider when published my Petrarch's Genius: Pentimento and Prophecy.
43. See E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 273, citing Euripides, Iphigenia Aulidensis 758.
44. Rhetoric and Reform, pp. 132-61.
45. William of St. Thierry, Meditativae orationes 13.
46. Blaise Pascal, Memorial.

Response by G. R. Evans, *Lecturer in History*
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Perhaps I may offer a mediaevalist's commentary on this most interesting and stimulating paper. It seems to me of great value in bringing together a large number of instances of Calvin's familiarity with technical terms and ideas, and to point to his conception of a Christian eloquentia (p. 3; cf. p. 2) which has come to terms, as Augustine's did, with classical rhetorical notions.

I wonder how helpful the notion of a "double legacy of philosophy and rhetoric" (p. 1) is in this context? Perhaps "humanism" and "rhetoric" and "philosophy" are defined elsewhere in the book from which this paper is drawn, as note 1 suggests. But the pedagogical pattern of teaching of rhetoric and philosophy in the late antique world and the rediscovery of their classical relationship during the Renaissance could usefully be considered here against the mediaeval picture of philosophy in relation to theology and logic. The revival of the study of classical rhetorical textbooks other than the two "Ciceronian rhetorics" and the rediscovery of ancient orations was something still comparatively new in Calvin's day and it made a difference to the pattern of the partes philosophiae in the syllabus.

Calvin's "classical education" was, like that of many contemporaries, a mixture of a mediaeval study of auctores for their sententiae, and an exploration of qualities only more recently perceived in them. They had always been read as models of correct usage and good style; in fact that was the primary justification for their continued use in elementary Latin instruction in the Middle Ages. How far was Calvin sensitive to something beyond that? When he compares the sweetness of reading Scripture with the pleasure to be got from classical authors (text at note 2), he was certainly aware that he was using a topos. Can we place him more exactly in the debate about Ciceronianus and Christianus? Does he see the literary delights of the classics in the same light as their philosophical usefulness to the theologian?

These are large questions and it is always difficult to give a satisfactory answer to them. My own interest was chiefly stirred by the discussion of language which begins in the last paragraph on p. 1. Professor Bouwsma suggests that it is the characteristic of a humanist to understand signification as a matter of usage. It is, of course, a long-running debate of the Middle Ages whether words had (before Babel confused them) an absolute relation to the things they signified, and Augustine initiated in the Latin tradition a concern with usus loquendi and the modi loquendi of Scripture which is not irrelevant here. As Calvin was aware, the Fathers of Trent had a good deal to say about proprietas, notably in their attempts to find a proper vocabulary in which to discuss the doctrine of justification. Calvin, as Professor Bouwsma points out, added to these concerns an awareness of changes in contemporary usage ("kings for "town councillors," p. 1) which was heightened in the sixteenth century by the efforts of translators to render the Greek and Hebrew into modern vernaculars. (Tyndale and Coverdale on "Church" and "congregation" for example.) It would be good to have more on what is new and

what is old here, what is "humanist" and what is taken over by humanists from earlier work and earlier preoccupations.

The particular question of transferred significations, figures, metaphorical language is raised on p. 3. It is perhaps a more delicate matter for Calvin than these paragraphs would suggest. Like other reformers he found himself disapproving of the lavish use of figurative interpretation of Scripture on patristic and mediaeval models, and at the same time, drawn to the device himself. He certainly recognized the deliberate use of figurative language in the Bible which had come to be reckoned part of the "literal sense" because it was what the author intended. The question of the human authorship of the books of the Bible is taken up on p. 4 and its implications illuminatingly explored. Perhaps something further might be got from linking this discussion with that on figurative language in the context of "intention" (p. 4).

Would it be useful to go a little further into Calvin's knowledge of the "three languages"? Few of his contemporaries could claim to be equally proficient in all three, and there are important respects in which knowledge of Hebrew tended to lag behind that of Greek, and both behind the knowledge of Latin. It is perhaps the limitations of contemporary knowledge of Greek and Hebrew which made the debate about the retention of the Vulgate seem so clear-cut to Protestants. With the confidence of those who believed themselves to have begun ad fontes humanists and reformers thought it nonsense to continue to use a text so manifestly full of errors. They were not, however, aware of the inadequacies of the Greek manuscripts available to them, nor of the excellence of the manuscript tradition upon which Jerome drew. There are complexities in all this which would repay further teasing out in this paper. Among the quotations from Calvin given here (pp. 5ff.) some show us Calvin the polemicist, others Calvin in a more reflective and scholarly mood. The use of the Glossa Ordinaria and other mediaeval commentary material is mentioned only in passing and the Fathers presented many problems to Protestant exegetes which are barely hinted at here. I mention these points not in criticism, but because it seems likely that if more space were given to them we should get a better picture of what exactly the "humanistic erudition" of Calvin amounts to (p. 6).

The examples given in the final pages of the paper are of sometimes tantalizing interest for similar reasons: many of them are commonplace debating-points of the day - probably the majority of them. We need a series of detailed studies of the handling of individual texts in sixteenth century exegesis, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, to give us a picture of the way longstanding discussions were transformed by the new learning. A case in point here (p. 10) is Calvin's understanding of "difference of times," a matter on which most mediaeval commentators thought differently because of their conception of the historical process under God.

A last point: perhaps a full consideration of exegesis as preaching could come in earlier? Preaching was not only recognized from the beginning as the natural vehicle of exegesis but it was also one of the three mediaeval rhetorical arts, and the only one to continue the traditions of oral delivery which were central to ancient rhetoric. In a paper on rhetoric this would make

a convenient starting-point for much that is said here.

These comments are offered with diffidence as points which struck one reader as suggesting possibilities for further investigation and discussion. May I say how much I enjoyed the piece and how valuable I found it as a prompter?

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LOGOS/SERMO AND THE "THEOLOGIA RHETORICA" OF HUMANISM*

translation from the Italian by Mirto Golo Stone

The intention of this response is to draw attention to a fundamental passage in the contribution presented by Professor Bouwsma, "Calvinism as Theologia Rhetorica"

Like Valla and Erasmus, too, he rendered Logos as sermo, God's "speech," oratio rather than ratio, rhetorical rather than philosophical discourse. "As 'speech' is said among men to be the image of the mind," Calvin observed, "so it is not inappropriate to apply this also to God and say that he expresses himself to us through his speech." (p. 11, and specifically note 127.)

I.

The passage of the Repastinatio, Book I, Chapter 9, to which Bouwsma and Keller refer is of essential importance for the epistemological foundation in Valla's "Theologica Rhetorica" first, and in Erasmus later on. Since "logos," according to Valla's philological semantic analysis, means "oratio/sermo" (at least in the first instance), rather than "ratio/cogitatio," it becomes necessary to define the human being not as an animal rationale, but rather as an animal loquens. The specific characteristic of a human being is not a product of rationality, but rather of his own creative capacity for language. The human being is his own language.

Such a conception of the human being derives from the tradition of classic and Hellenistic rhetoric: from Isocrates to Quintilian. (Inst. Orat. II, 16.15-16 - to which Valla explicitly refers in the above mentioned passage of the Repastinatio.)

Furthermore, since the human being is made "in God's own image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26 - a biblical passage that Valla directly connects to Quintilian, Inst. Orat. II, 16.15-16), it is necessary to conceive of God also essentially as the eternal Word which, becoming incarnate, becomes human

*For the text of "Dialecticae Disputationes" according to the Vulgate title of Valla's work here considered, we refer to the recent critical edition edited by G. Zippel, Laurentii Valle: Respastinatio Dialectice et Philosophie (Padua, 1982), in two volumes with continuous pagination. Volume I contains the second and third draft of Valla's work: pp. 1-356; volume 2 contains the first draft. For a broader study of the concerns here considered, I take the liberty to refer to my "Lorenzo Valla - 'Repastinatio,' Liber Primus: Retorica e Linguaggio" in Renaissance Studies in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth, vol. 1 (Florence, 1985): 261-79.

"sermo": the Incarnation consists as event (and as mystery) in the fact that God's Word becomes modern language.

II.

Parallel to the conception of the human being and of the God of Revelation is the conception of language which early humanism (from Petrarch to Valla) elaborates in opposition to the Aristotelian and scholastic tradition. This "rhetorical" (and anti-philosophical) conception of language is theorized by Valla, in systematic fashion, in the entire Liber primus of the Repastinatio. This is, briefly and in its entire outline, what Valla states.

Philosophy has ontologized language, now it is a question of de-ontologizing it: this is Valla's program. Classic and scholastic philosophy had interpreted words and idioms as expressions of substances and ways of being beyond language itself. Valla tries to show, by means of morphological, syntactical and semantic analysis, that words and idioms neither presuppose nor signify substances and ways of being.

All of the reality, in fact, of the res significate is identified and consists, for us, in the significationes verborum. The whole of significationes verborum, that is to say, the totality of the semantic content both of the particular discourse as well as of language in general, is the one and only reality that we know in a more or less adequate measure. There certainly are realities which transcend our immediate experience, whether sensible or spiritual: such as, for example, the soul and its nature, God or the mystery of the Trinity, human freedom or the predestination to salvation. Realities such as these, however, cannot be circumscribed neither within an univocal language - precisely because they transcend our experience - nor within an analogical language, since no analogia entis is given. Such realities can be expressed only through the rhetoric of comparatio (each time: images, metaphors or myth) and/or through the acknowledgement of their inutterability or of the silence imposed by the intangibility and impenetrability of their mystery.

The last consequences, finally stem from here. The grammaticus, or, actually, the rhetor, is the true sophos. Rhetoric, in fact, studies the vis verborum, the "grammar" and the weight of the word, in order to reach the vis rerum, the dimension of things which can be known. The search for the structures and the contents of language in general and of the various idioms in particular, brings to the knowledge of the realities of which we speak; and the realities expressed and contained in language are the ones which constitute the object, the truth towards which thought, in fact, tends, and the only one it can tend toward.

From what we have been saying, it seems to me that the "Theologia Rhetorica" of the humanists has as its own epistemological basis, on the one hand, the conception of the human being as a creature essentially creative of language: all of reality identifies itself and becomes the same thing, for us, with language itself. Within the anti-philosophical and rhetorical concept of language sermo et res convertuntur.

To sum it up, Bouwsma's reading of Calvin's work as "Theologia Rhetorica" could be extended to other fundamental texts of the Reformation. For this purpose, I will quote here in full a text which concluded a long research project on Luther, by Leif Grane, Modus Loquendi Theologicus. Luthers Kampf um die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515-1516):

Zur Frage nach Luthers Verhaeltnis zum Humanismus konnte ich keinen eigentlichen Beitrag leisten. Das ist umso schmerzlicher, als gerade dieses Thema, soweit ich sehe, von grosser Bedeutung ist. Luther wendet sich gegen die philosophische Theologie des Aristotelismus. Aber zugleich argumentiert er mit Hilfe einiger Begriffe, die jedenfalls nach unserem Empfinden ausgesprochen philosophischer Natur sind, obwohl sie fuer Luther wohl zur Grammatik oder zur Rhetorik gehoeren. Auf diesen Gebieten fehlen uns, soweit ich sehe, die notwendigen Spezialuntersuchungen. Deshalb war es mir nur moeglich, Luthers Aussagen wiederzugeben, aber nicht im notwendigen Ausmass seine "Philosophie" zu charakterisieren. Vielleicht koennte uns hier ein eingehendes Studium der humanistischen Philologen und Exegeten, die Luther benuetzte, weiterhelfen (Leiden, 1975, pp. 193f., and corresponding notes).

Response by Charles Trinkaus, *Professor Emeritus*
The University of Michigan

I should like, first of all, to express my admiration for Professor Bouwsma's paper. It is another of his gems, carefully researched, thoughtfully pondered, carefully and comprehensively organized, appropriately and persuasively written, if itself not a work of theologia rhetorica, certainly one of historica rhetorica. As the inventor of the term theologia rhetorica, as Professor Bouwsma so graciously acknowledges in his note 1, I observe with a certain delight the careful and discerning selection of the major characteristics of rhetorica as a Renaissance humanist might have learned from his studies of Cicero and Quintilian. Of equal satisfaction was his application of these categories under the two large divisions of persuasio and eruditio to Calvin's Biblical commentaries (principally), and less extensively to his other genres of writing. His analysis and exposition is, indeed, a model of what I think an interpreter of a Renaissance theologian should undertake. I am also glad to observe his citation of the two scholars who have most notably and effectively applied the preconceptions of rhetorical theology to figures who were major influences in establishing this mode of interpretation for the Renaissance: namely Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle in her study of Erasmus in note 11, and Salvatore I. Camporeale, in his study of Lorenzo Valla, contrasting Valla's rhetorical methodology with Aquinas's philosophical theology in note 31. I would certainly commend the writings of both of these scholars to the participants in the Colloquy, the works in particular cited by Bouwsma, but also where practicable and for further study their other writings.

I would foresee major discussion of the differences between theologia rhetorica and theologia philosophica (or dialectica). Camporeale, in comparing various writings of Lorenzo Valla supporting the value of rhetoric in theology with Aquinas's Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate shows that Thomas in defining a scientia fidei affirms a relative identity and an absolute diversity between theology and philosophy. By means of his method of analogia entis, he resolves the diversity by the assumption of philosophical language into the language of faith and by subordinating ontology to theology making "natura preambula ad gratium." Thus, Camporeale argues, philosophy, which is absolutely diverse and subordinate to theology, gains no advantage over rhetoric as a mode of knowing or establishing theological truth. Both relate to divine truth by analogy or similitude. (Work cited by Bouwsma in note 31, pp. 73-77, 121-126.)

Bouwsma, whose essay is part of a chapter of a larger work on Calvin, emphasizes here divine and human decorum or accommodation of language to various conditions of time, regions, culture, individual character of the audience or reader on the part of the Holy Spirit, of the human author of scripture, and of the commentator. He does not take up the question of the relationship of man and God as may be implied by man's creation in God's image and likeness, alluding to this only once. An important question and an issue for me would be how Calvin saw the nature of man as divine image before the Fall and how he saw this after it. Are Calvin's doctrinal speculations about man as a divine image in any way connected with this rhetorical juxtaposition of a deity accommodating his Word and revelation to the variable existential

condition of man and of man doing the same? An analogous question is whether the human sermo is an image and likeness of the divine logos? Moreover, is so-called Bild Theologie to be associated with theologia rhetorica? There were three occasions when it was prominent: in the writings of St. Augustine, in twelfth-century theologians who were also literary authors, and among Renaissance humanists. To what extent might it be argued that there is an internal, organic relationship between the two modes of theologizing? One would have to show that among the thirteenth-century scholastics the emphasis on both was down-played, as I think can be argued; man's nature tended to be examined within the context of Aristotle's De anima rather than of Augustine's De Trinitate. Is this speculation concerning image theology and theologia rhetorica applicable to Calvin?

Bouwsma also speaks of God's creation by the Word, his revelation through scripture. Does Calvin regard only language and speech as subject to rhetoric and the medium of divine and human relations? Or does he extend this kind of reasoning to the visual arts? He seems, according to Bouwsma, to include poetry. If God creates and the human authors of scripture create, does the theologian create? Does the painter, sculptor, musician create? And do they follow analogous methods to rhetoric and poetics? On the other hand, might it be said that the painter or sculptor theologizes? Think of Michelangelo, or Leonardo or Giotto. Leo Steinberg, it would seem, thinks so. If Calvin manifests a theologia rhetorica, would he approve or recognize a theologia poetica? These are some related questions.

A major question, which I assume Bouwsma deals with elsewhere in his book, is that of the relationship of rhetoric and will, human and divine. It is an assumption of rhetoric that the speaker and audience are both motivated by intention. The speaker is trying by his use of the rules of rhetoric to persuade his audience. The audience is either ready to be persuaded or to resist persuasion. These are all acts of the will, not of the intellect. Does Calvin, in keeping with his emphasis upon and use of rhetoric, stress the priority of the will over the intellect in man? Does he also, and under what circumstance, accept the notion of freedom of choice as a necessary aspect of will? How, it obviously follows, does this relate to the doctrine of predestination? And does predestination in Calvin, as in other theologians, rest on the assumption of the preeminence of the will over the intellect? In other words, an important issue to explore is the relationship of a rhetorical theology to the doctrines that are usually emphasized in traditional interpretations of Calvin's theology.

Calvin, it had been pointed out, recognized freedom of choice in secular matters, economic and political decisions, intellectual questions, but denied that man had any freedom at all over divine matters, including any ability to influence his own election. An interesting question suggested by this dual idea is whether Professor Bouwsma has noted any important discussions of the theory or dialectic of the two powers of God, the absolute or the ordained. Although this theological doctrine first developed in early scholastic theology, it became a major emphasis of late medieval scholastics and certainly also of some of the reformers. It also found at least some form of expression among some of the Renaissance humanists, explicitly in Erasmus, in effect but not in terminology in Coluccio Salutati and, arguably, in Lorenzo Valla. It

was certainly not exclusively a characteristic of rhetorically oriented theologians. My question would be whether there is any consistent co-presence of two-power and rhetorical theologies.

Finally, the latter questions I have been voicing lead to the larger one of whether theologica rhetorica in any way contributes to the shaping of doctrine, or whether it takes doctrine as a given which it promulgates, investigates, settles the authenticity of its sources, and seeks to persuade. If there are many schools of scholastic dialectical theology among both Catholics and Protestants, is this then true also of rhetorical or humanistic theology? If the source or authority is thought to be the scriptures, must not their teaching rest on interpretation? And which then is to be regarded as authoritative on the basis of what sort of decision other than the traditional rhetorical one of common assent? These are ultimate kinds of questions. But more immediately, where does Professor Bouwsma think Calvin stood on them and was this consistent with the elements Professor Bouwsma has identified as Calvin's theologica rhetorica?

Response by Charles L. Bartow
Professor of Speech Communications and Homiletics
San Francisco Theological Seminary

My response will be from the perspective of a preacher and a teacher of preachers. I do that preaching and teaching in what most people no doubt would call a Calvinist setting. What a Calvinist setting is, however, has never been very clear to me. Nor, I suspect, has it been especially clear to many others. A great service of Professor Bouwsma's paper, therefore, is to shed some light on a murky subject, clearing up - at least to some extent - the Calvinist identity by articulating that identity in terms of its source. And what could be more agreeable to any homiletician than to find that the source of his or her identity is a person who not only engages in rhetoric but thinks rhetorically, a person for whom God's Logos is "sermo, God's speech, oratio rather than ratio..."?

Bouwsma's Calvin is a man of his times, a humanist rhetorician who loves classics and for whom the Bible is a classic, who contains and sometimes conceals "the tensions and contradictions of his culture" instead of harmonizing those tensions and contradictions or denying them. He is a man for whom speech is the means by which people deal with one another "humanly," binding themselves to one another in society. Bouwsma's Calvin seems interested in identification - almost in Kenneth Burke's sense of that term - not isolation, catholic unity, not sectarian solidarity. His hermeneutic is subtle and critical, and the issues he engaged - the importance of authorial intent, the influence of linguistic systems upon the translation of meaning, the impact of culture upon authors' and readers' points of view, the significance of authorial "voice" and the effect of tropes upon audience perception and response - are engaged still, albeit with yet greater subtlety and with more schoolish vehemence than Calvin could have imagined.

He knew the danger and promise of speech, its capacity, in Ong's phrase, to reveal a person's "interiority" and thus to render him or her vulnerable. He preferred persuasive to coercive power, and evidently learned to live with the limits of his own power. (We all know the story of his failure to convince the governing authorities in Geneva to adopt for the churches the regular, weekly observance of the eucharist.) And, in at least one matter, this reformer was a traditionalist. Specifically, he insisted that received interpretations of texts of the faith be adhered to instead of novel interpretations unless the weight of evidence clearly gave novelty the advantage. After reading William Bouwsma's "Calvinism as Theologica Rhetorica," I almost am convinced of the aptness of my colleague Ben Reist's light-hearted observation that, were he alive today, Calvin most likely would be a high-church Episcopalian and not a Presbyterian. I further fancy that his favorite theologian would be David Tracy who, in The Analogical Imagination, argued so forcefully for an understanding of theology as public discourse. He would line up with Hirsch in hermeneutics, and, of the once so-called "new rhetoricians," he probably would favor Kenneth Burke. All of which is to say that the Calvinist setting would be reformed, catholic, ecumenical and, above all, rhetorical, seeking always to combine eruditio with persuasio.

Yet clearly that cannot be the whole story and Bouwsma himself makes that evident with the concluding sentence of his essay: "There are eloquent passages in Calvin's sermons, but, fearful perhaps of losing control over himself, and relying on Scripture as a bridle, he composed few eloquent sermons." One cannot help wondering why the lack of sustained eloquence. Was it simply that Calvin feared losing self-control or that the Scriptures indeed did function too much as a bridle? Or was there a matter of principle involved, a theological-rhetorical principle? Frankly, I am not myself in a position to determine whether or not the following line of thought has merit, but I will trace the line out anyway, trusting that those better positioned to assess it will do so.

Over and over again in "Calvinism as Theologica Rhetorica," Professor Bouwsma returns to the theme of decorum. Evidently Calvin thought the biblical authors decorous in their speech, always accommodating what they had to say to the capacity of their audience to hear. Their rhetoric was essentially decorous. To borrow a figure from architecture, form followed function, and the function of the word was to make God's will, as understood by the biblical authors, intelligible and do-able. It was not enough that words made sense. They also had to hold significance for the conduct of human life. An eloquent sermon consequently would not be a sermon which in all particulars lived up to the canons of classical rhetoric, as those canons might have been redefined by the renaissance humanists. Instead, an eloquent sermon would be one which rendered the meaning of a text of Scripture clear and compelling.

Furthermore, Calvin evidently regarded God as the supreme rhetorician who in the deed of the incarnation rendered the divine presence perfectly decorous, accommodated as fully to the human condition as human beings could bear. In Calvin's own words, God must "descend to us so that we may mount to him." God might even "stammer," Calvin observed, and yet the stammering power of the "living voice of God could be contrasted with the advantage to "the empty and lifeless speech of men"; perhaps even to the comparatively empty and lifeless speech of the humanist rhetoricians? Here again, decorum may be seen as the transcendent rhetorical norm, the norm disclosed in Christ as the final measure of eloquence. That sermon is eloquent, therefore, which not only makes texts of Scripture clear and compelling, but which also shares in witness to the Incarnation. Could it be, then, that for Calvin eloquence in preaching was a function not of fidelity to the norms of humanist rhetoric but of fidelity to the Word of God? And could that be the reason why he was free to observe that "Hebrew writers customarily use interrogatio when they wish emphatically to deny something," whereas "for Greeks and Latins it would be tasteless"? There is no doubt that when he wished to do so and deemed it appropriate, Calvin could hold his own with the rhetorician of his day, as one of them, manifesting eloquence according to obtaining rhetorical norms. Surely his "Prefatory address to King Francis I of France" in the Institutes provides creditable testimony to that fact. In his preaching, however, a different norm of eloquence seemed to govern his work. Godly decorum apparently was its name, and it consisted in fidelity to the Word of God in Scripture and in Christ.

Perhaps for Calvin, homiletics and rhetoric, though having much in common, were distinct disciplines, rhetoric taking its source in the classics of antiquity and homiletics taking its source in the classics of the Christian

faith, Scripture and the Christ. If that could be demonstrated as true, it would certainly contribute to making sense of a comment made to me once by Edward Dowey of Princeton to the effect that Calvin's homiletic, his rhetoric of the Word, if you will, could be summed up in this way: "actio, actio, actio." What counted after all, that is to say, was what had happened between the preacher and the listeners under the power of the Spirit as the Scriptures were explicated and applied in fidelity to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. In that happening, divine eloquence was manifest. Outside that happening, it was not, and skill in inventio, dispositio, elocutio and memoria could not make up the difference. It is interesting in this connection to observe that Calvin evidently did not prepare sermon manuscripts but sought, in the preaching moment itself, in direct, face to face encounter with his audience, to combine eruditio with persuasio, giving prominent place to the audience in the shaping of the sermon, thus attempting, to speak the Word of God with decorum and appropriate eloquence.

Now all of this is not to defend Calvin as eloquent. Perhaps even on some unique homiletical standard as opposed to a purely rhetorical standard it would be necessary in the end to say that "he composed few eloquent sermons." Be that as it may, the point is rather to achieve some clarity regarding a definition of the Calvinist setting for preaching and the teaching of preaching today. That setting is to be reformed, catholic, ecumenical and rhetorical, as already has been noted. However, it would seem that the Calvinist setting is to be evangelical as well, devoted to the explication of Scripture and the preaching of Christ in a manner suited to particular audiences. Indeed, for Calvin, perhaps to be reformed is to be evangelical in precisely that sense. The greatest contribution Professor Bouwsma has made with his "Calvinism as Theologia Rhetorica" to those of us doing homiletics in a Calvinist setting today, therefore, is to have reminded us of Calvin's own priorities in communication of the gospel: fidelity to Scripture, fidelity to Christ and fidelity to the audience and situation. Bouwsma quotes Calvin's admonition to "consider the needs of the times and what is appropriate to the people," for example, "for in this matter nothing is more unbalanced than absolute balance." Rhetorical skill is not unimportant and neither is theological precision, but if they must suffer eclipse for the sake of fidelity to Scripture, Christ, audience and situational exigencies, so be it. That inevitably is the protestant or evangelical risk. It is not a risk one takes lightly. But it nevertheless is a risk one does take.

A final thought: in taking protestant or evangelical risk today, there are those who would argue that though Calvin himself may help to set the agenda for us, his conclusions, his insights and his methodological observations may not be of very much use in dealing with that agenda. As has been noted, Calvin's hermeneutic was subtle, critical and amazingly tolerant of ambiguity considering the temper of the times. But his "learned, responsible and reverent" biblical criticism did not have to contend with the issues of semantic autonomy, the implied reader or hearer, the hermeneutics of suspicion, deconstruction, feminist reconstruction and sociological analysis. His homiletical practice did not take place in a theological milieu shaped by process, liberation and narrative theology. And the habits of perception and expression of the people of his day had not been influenced by the electronic media. Obviously that means that the theory and practice of preaching today,

as Calvin were he alive no doubt would acknowledge, cannot simply ape Calvin. In fact to do so would be to contradict a basic tenet of the Calvinist tradition.

Some, though, in the homiletical enterprise and in other fields of theological inquiry, would argue for a radical break with tradition and any notion of transcontextually relevant knowledge. The humanist goal of separating historical essence from accident, the perennially valuable from that which is purely idiosyncratic to a given age and culture, to them would be illusory, a waste of energy, maybe even dangerous. For them, it would seem, all communications - all preaching, all theology, all ethics, etc. - is post historical, or, if in any way imitative of the past or tutored by it, irrelevant or dysfunctional. Those of us who preach and who teach preaching - in Calvinist and in other settings - in fact tend to operate exactly in accordance with the presuppositions of the radical contextualists; although, for the most part we do so without seriously examining those presuppositions. My suspicion is that the radical contextualists' presuppositions will not bear scrutiny, and a document such as Bouwsma's "Calvinism as Theologia Rhetorica," because of its capacity to stir reflection on present issues through a clear and provocative treatment of how one man dealt with similar issues in the past, goes a long way toward proving that point. In other words, it is high time for contemporary homiletics to take seriously the history of preaching, to break away from its almost exclusive identification with practical or functional theology, and to recover its ties with the humane disciplines.

Response by Thomas Conley, *Professor of Rhetoric*
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"THEOLOGIA RHETORICA" AND JOHN CALVIN

Bouwsma's general claim in "Calvinism and theologia rhetorica" is by now familiar. Far from being a repressive disciplinarian, a cold "logic machine," and autocrat, perhaps a radical who tended toward fanaticism, Calvin, in this alternative version, must be understood in the context of Renaissance humanism. Calvin, like Erasmus (who is obviously in the back of Bouwsma's mind here), was deeply influenced by the new learning, had assimilated the wisdom of the classics, was devoted to philological and historical methods of criticism and exegesis, was prepared (so Bouwsma, pp. 16f.) to admit the probability of arguments other than his own, and wrote sometimes elegantly and always eloquently. His was a theologia rhetorica.¹

To assimilate Calvin to a humanist like Erasmus in such a way, however, is ultimately misleading. However many similarities one can claim - and there are more than a few - a hasty comparison of the two is liable to conflate incompatible notions of "rhetoric" and consequently of "humanism" and "theology" as well. To do that is to obscure rather than clarify the complex nature of Sixteenth Century theological activity north of the Alps. Thus, although it is difficult to separate those notions in talking about Calvin and Erasmus, I want to sketch briefly in what follows some crucial ways in which these two differed greatly as "humanists," as "rhetoricians," and, implicitly, as "theologians." I hope my quest for brevity in discussing such vast subjects will not leave too much out or itself result in obscurity in place of clarity.

1. "Humanism" is, as we all know, a very slippery term. In the Renaissance, no such abstract term was used.² If "humanism" in the present instance means simply a sort of devotion to litterae humaniores, then it must be granted that both Calvin and Erasmus were "humanists." Likewise, if "humanism" is understood as the Renaissance reaction to scholasticism, then both could be called "humanists." But to imagine that Calvin and Erasmus were "humanists" in any but these most general ways is to cover up vast differences. Calvin, to put it bluntly, could no more have written a Praise of Folly than Erasmus could have pressed for the conviction and execution of a Servetus.³ If we understand "humanism" to indicate an intellectual and ethical stance, it is clear that exposure to litterae humaniores and reaction against scholasticism produced two very different mentalities in Erasmus (who saw "humanitas" and caritas as virtually interchangeable)⁴ and Calvin (who did not).

2. The differences between Erasmus and Calvin emerge a little more clearly and precisely when one compares their respective rhetorics ("styles") and conceptions of "rhetoric."⁵

a. Calvin. Calvin begins the 1539 version of the Institutes in this way:⁶

Tota fere sapientiae nostrae summa, quae vera densum et solida
 sapientia censeri debeat, duabus partibus constat: cognitione Dei, et

nostri. Illa scilicet, quae non modo unum esse Deum ostendat, quem ab omnibus oporteat coli et adorari, sed simul etiam doceat, illum omnis veritatis, sapientiae, bonitatis, iustitiae, iudicii, misericordiae, potentiae, sanctitatis fontem esse, ut ab ipso et expectare et petere universa ista discamus, praeterea cum laude et gratiarum actione accepta, illi referre. Altera autem, quae nostram nobis imbecillitatem, miseriam, vanitatem, foeditatem ostendo, primum nos in seriam humilitatem, deiectionem, diffidentiam, odiumque nostri adducat...

(I.1.1)

This gets toned down considerably in the 1559 version,⁷ but it is rather typical of Calvin's style - not to mention also of his diaeretic and aprioristic vision of the universe - as it amplifies by accumulation and contrast, using perhaps the most degrading terms he can imagine relative to the human race. It is, in other words, hardly calculated to capture the benevolence of his audience, hardly a "lector benevolo."

The power of Calvin's style owes a lot to his use of various kinds of repetition - anaphora, for instance, and "pleonasm" among others:⁸

Hoc ergo studendum est, si Christi discipuli esse volumus, ut tanta Dei observantia atque obedientia imbuantur animi nostri, quae contrarias omnes affectiones domare ac subiugare eius ordinationi queat. Ita fiet ut, quocunque vexemur crucis genere, in summis etiam animi angustiis patientiam constanter retineamus. Res enim ipsae adversae habebunt suam asperitatem qua mordeamur. Sic morbo afflicti et ingemiscemus, et inquietabimur et sanitatem expetemus; sic egestate pressi, sollicitudinis et tristitiae aculeis perstringemur; sic ignominiae, contemptus, iniuriae dolore feriemur; sic in funeribus nostrorum debitas naturae lacrymas exsolvemus.

(III.8.10)

Sometimes Calvin uses an accumulation of questions in addition to repetition:

Atque ita accipiendum quod ait Paulus (Col 1:24): Suppleo in corpore meo ex quae desunt passionum Christi pro corpore eius, quid est ecclesia. Quid hoc est, nisi Christo nomen reliquere, caeterum vulgarem sanctulum facere, qui in turba vix dignoscatur? Unum, unum illum praedicare decebat, unum proponi, unum nominari, unum respici quum de obtinenda peccatorum remissione, expiatione, sanctificatione agitur. Sed audiamus eorum enthymemata. Ne sine fructu effusus sit sanguis martyrum in commune ecclesiae bonum conferatur. Itane? an vero nullus erat fructus glorificare Deum per mortem? veritati eius suo sanguine subscribere? testificari praesentis vitae contemptu, meliorem se vitam quaerere? fidem ecclesiae sua constantia confirmare, hostium autem pertinaciam frangere? Sed hoc est scilicet, nullum fructum agnoscunt, si solus Christi est propriator, si solus mortuus est propter peccata nostra, si solus est oblatus pro nostra redemptione.

(III.5.3)

Prose rhythm and parallelism play an important role, too. Note the crescendo in the following:

Id quo intelligatur, necesse est redire ad illam carnis et spiritus divisionem, cuius alibi meminimus quae in hac parte lucidissime se profert. Sentit ergo in se divisionem pium pectus, quod partim ob divinae bonitatis agnitionem sua vitate perfunditur, partim ob suae calamitatis sensum amaritudine angitur, partim in evangelii promissionem recumbit, partim suae iniquitatis testimonio trepidat, partim vitae apprehensione exultat, partim mortem exhorrescit.

(III.2.18)

At times, the combination of such stylistic devices results in a prose that is almost hypnotic - powerful stuff indeed:

Sed quomodo excusarent, quum immenso apud eos sceleratius sit auricularem confessionem vertente anno praetermisisse, quam nequissimam vitam in solidum annum produxisse? linguam die veneris infecisse modico carnis gustu, quam totum corpus diebus omnibus scortando foedasse? manum, die sanctulis nescio quibus consecrato, admovisse honesto operi, quam pessimis facinoribus assidue membra omnia exercuisse? sacrificium legitimo uno connubio copulari, quam illigari mille adulteriis; votivam peregrinationem non persolvere, quam in promissis omnibus fidem fallere? In prodigiosos nec minus supervacuos ac inutiles templorum luxus non aliquid profudisse, quam defuisse ultimus pauperum necessitatibus? idolum sine honore praeterisisse, quam hominum omne genus contumeliose tractasse? non demurmurasse certis horis longa sine sensu verba, quam legitimam orationem animo nunquam concepisse? Quid est irritum facere propter suas traditiones Dei praeceptum, nisi hoc est?

(IV.10.10)

The voice in these passages is unmistakable. And it is a voice which pervades his other writings, even occasionally his commentaries:⁹ intense, sincere, perhaps, but often brutal, sometimes almost fanatical.

b. Erasmus. Erasmus was capable of such rhetoric, too, of course, as he was of any and all rhetorical postures. But such rhetoric as Calvin's could never be properly "erasmian." Thus, when we read in Erasmus's ennarratio on Psalm 4:¹⁰

Si placet irasci, sic irascere ut non pecces. Irascere peccatis tuis, et amplectere misericordiam. Quod tibi frustra blandiris veluti iusto, et incircuncisos abominaris velut imundos? Nullum repperi a peccatis immunem. Quid tibi iactas opera tua? Quid exprobas gentibus vitam impiam et impuram? Ex fide salus est, non ex operibus...

(p.204.346-50)

we must be careful to note that it is not Erasmus speaking an instance of prosopopoiia: this is what God would say.¹¹

True, Erasmus is capable of rhetoric that equals in its harshness and

energy anything Calvin was to write. For example:

Qui de mundo sunt amant ea quae sunt huius mundi: amant primos accubitus in conviviis, amant ambulare in stolis et phylacteriis conspicui, amant saluari rabbi in foro, amant ocium, amant ex alieno vivere. Diligunt opes, diligunt voluptates carnis, diligunt tyrannidem. Et ideo non ferunt sermonem evangelicum quia contrarius est cupiditatibus ac factis ipsorum... Quid interim humilis ille Christus? Defertur, capitur, ligatur, caeditur, damnatur, crucifigitur, moritur, sepulitur. Insultant Pharisei: Descendat nunc de cruce. Vah qui destruit templum Dei, alios fecit, seipsum non potest salvum facere (Mk 15:29-31). Haec nimirum est vox mundi victoriam suam iactantis adversus sermonem evangelicum. Quid interea pusillus ille grex? Fugitat, latitat, mussitat et tamen apud se non desinit vel gemitu dicere: Disrumpans vincula eorum, proiciamus a nobis iugum ipsorum.

(p.120.746-63)¹²

But Erasmus attacks the Pharisees here, not his audience.

And if Erasmus sounds harsh early in the Hyperaspistes,¹³ as at

Et his ipse tuus sermo secum pugnans, prodit insinceritatem tui pectoris. Qui convenit ut tibi sit carissimus, et frater carissimus, et venerabilis, optimus, et quid non? cum eundem pronunties impium, blasphemum adversus Deum, denique ἄθεον? Adeone putas homines esse fungos, ut non intelligant quo spiritu ducaris cum ista scribis, ex eodem ore frigidum efflans et calidum, ex eodem poculo mel porrigens ac venenum, altera manu panem ostentans, altera lapidem incutiens? Quorsum autem attinebat hic tot verba perdere de mea summa eloquentia, deque tua summa infantia? In disputatione de Libero Arbitrio, quid facit eloquentia? Ego istam eloquentiam non iacto, nec agnosco, nec affecto...

we must recall the context of the dispute with Lught, which had gone on, and become more bitter, over a period of years. Erasmus had good reason to take the posture he did in Hyperaspistes.

Erasmus's own rhetoric, by contrast, is more conciliatory. It is not mere convention that explains why he begins his ennarratio triplex on Psalm 22 by addressing his reader thus:

Adfero Psalmum, charissimi, verbis quidem astrictum, sed ingenti spiritualium gaudiorum fruge exuberantem. Si versus numeritis, perbrevis est; si gaudia quae pollicetur aestimetis, aeterna sunt, nec modum habentia, nec finem. Colligat Dominus corda vestra in unum, ut attente audiatis, dilatet spiritum vestrum, ut mysteriorum capaces esse possitis...

(p.329.1-7)

This is Erasmus the teacher talking, not Calvin.

For Calvin, then, rhetoric is the instrumentality by which consent and

agreement are effected, not only by the rigor of his arguments but also (and perhaps chiefly) by the forcefulness of his style.¹⁴ In that regard, perhaps, Trinkaus's characterization of theologica rhetorica as the sort of theology by which "matters of faith... must be induced" (emphasis added)¹⁵ by rhetoric fits Calvin well enough. In Calvin, moreover, what is induced is discovered by means of divine illumination - "the knowledge of faith" which consists "in assurance rather than comprehension" (Inst. 3.2.14) - prior to its expression by the rhetor theologicus. The pertinent comparison here is not with Erasmus, but with Plato or Ramus.¹⁶

But there is another kind of theologia rhetorica which is not taken into account by Trinkaus's view. Rhetoric, as is obvious from Erasmus's De libero arbitrio and the Paraphrases particularly,¹⁷ may be seen as a method not only of "inducing" or of expression, but of invention, of inquiry; not merely as effective transmission of doctrine but as a mode of communication between text and reader and of reader and text with audience, as is obvious from the ennarrationes Erasmus composed on various Psalms.¹⁸ While Calvin may occasionally (and only in places where it doesn't much matter) express uncertainty or a willingness to accept another's argument, his rhetoric forces certitudes upon his audience, not probabilities, and deals with closed issues, not with possibilities.¹⁹ Calvin's commentaries are free of "interference" by others' opinions;²⁰ those of Erasmus proceed by way of active judicious consideration of others' opinions, establishing the most probably, and amplifying on it - a little like Cicero's method in De natura deorum, or the Tusculan Disputations.²¹ Erasmus, in short, is seldom as sure as Calvin. In Erasmus's hermeneutic, the fruition of sense seems to be perpetually deferred.²² His desire to arrive at a moment of full understanding initiates not a "definitive" interpretation, but an endless series of re-writings - glosses, paraphrases, explorations of tropological implications. When we speak of theologia rhetorica, therefore, we must be careful to specify (at least) which rhetorica we have in mind.

3. The different notions Calvin and Erasmus had of rhetoric are reflected in two rather distinct ideas of hermeneutic to be found in their respective bodies of writing. In one, meaning is clothed in language, the Verbum Dei is expressed "in other words," words that are suited to the abilities and needs of the audience and calculated to instruct and, above all, move it. In the other the Sermo Dei is re-enacted, systematically amplified in paraphrase and ennarratio, so that the speaker (exegete) and hearer alike might participate in its eloquence. The former, which is Calvin's, is more akin to modern language theory and hermeneutic than the latter. In a very real sense, "modern" philosophy began not with Descartes but with Luther and the "theologia nove." The latter, which is the hermeneutic of Erasmus and of the "old theology,"²³ has been obscured by modern philosophy by as much as philosophy has succeeded in detaching rhetoric from any role in understanding and relegating it to an arbitrary realm of speaking; and this could only have happened as thinking and meaning devolved into the realm of the pre-linguistic. In pondering the complexities of "theologia rhetorica," in other words, one can begin to make out the dim outlines of understanding itself, which is why the study of Calvin or of Erasmus - indeed, of both - is ultimately worth pursuing. To do that well, it seems to me, requires that we avoid conflating the views of those two great thinkers and that we treat the differences between them with the utmost respect.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Q. Breen, John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism (Grand Rapids, 1931) and "John Calvin and the Historical Tradition," Church History 26(1957): 3-21 (rpt. in Christianity and Humanism (Grand Rapids, 1968), pp. 107-29); E. David Willis, "Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin's Theology," in The Context of Contemporary Theology (Atlanta, 1974), pp. 43-63; R. Peter, "Rhétorique et prédication selon Calvin," RHPR 55(1975), pp. 249-72; Fr. Wendel, Calvin et l'humanisme (Paris, 1976), esp. pp. 63-98; A. Ganozcy and S. Scheld, Die Hermeneutik Calvins (Wiesbaden, 1983), esp. pp. 136-87; and S. Selinger, Calvin Against Himself (Hamden, CT., 1984). L. Wencelius collected many passages on rhetoric from Calvin's writings in L'esthétique de Calvin (Paris, 1937), pp. 309-73.
2. On the term "humanism," see R. Pfeiffer, History of Classical Scholarship from 1300-1850 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 17f. P. Kristeller's "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," Byzantion 17(1944/5): 346-74, is still important reading.
3. Michael Servetus was burned alive in Geneva on 27 October 1553. Calvin's protestations of innocence notwithstanding (see his letter to Farel, written the day before Servetus's execution, Corpus reformationum (=CR), ed. E. Reuss et al., 42.657f., e.g.), the responsibility for Servetus's fate was largely his.
4. "Humanitas" in Petrarch, it will be recalled, meant the same as φιλανθρωπία.
5. Given the nature of the observations I want to make, it is necessary to quote in extenso and in Latin. References to Calvin's Institutes are from the CR text in CR 30 (= Calvini opera (CO) 2), unless otherwise noted.
6. In CR 29 (CO 1).
7. There the equivalent is: Tota fere sapientiae nostrae summe, quae vera demum ac solida sapientia censari debeat, duabus partibus constat, Dei cognitione et nostri. Caeterum, quum multis inter se vinculis connexae sint, itra tamen alteram praecedat, et ex se pariat, non facile est discernere. Nam primo se nemo aspicere potest quin ad Dei, in quo vivat et movetur (Act 17:28), intuitum sensus suos protinus convertat...
8. By "pleonasm" here I refer to synonymia and related kinds of "doubling."
9. For such style in Calvin's sermons, cf. Peter, op. cit., pp. 263-8, for numerous citations. Calvin's style in his commentaries is reserved, for the most part; but see, e.g., in his Commentary on Psalms (CR 59 = CO 31), ad 7:13, col. 85; ad 11:4, col. 123; ad 14:3, coll. 137f., etc. See also F. Higman, The Style of John Calvin in his French Polemical Treatises (Oxford, 1967).

10. Citations of Erasmus's commentaries on various psalms are to Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera Omnia 5:2 in Ennarrationes in Psalmos pars prior, ed. C. Bené et al. (Amsterdam, 1985).
11. The similarity of "God's" style and Calvin's raises some intriguing questions.
12. The last citation in this passage is of the verse (Ps 2:3) Erasmus is commenting on.
13. Text in Ausgewaehlte Schriften 4, ed. Lesowsky (Darmstadt, 1969), pp. 223f.
14. Selinger, pp.91ff., 171ff., has some very interesting observations on Calvin's style.
15. I do not think Trinkaus's "induced" has anything to do with "induction," unless it be in the sense that physicians "induce" treatments - drugs, or enemas.
16. The connections between Calvinism and Ramism remain largely unexplored. On Calvin and Plato, see G. Babelotzky, Platonischer Bilder und Gedankengaenge in Calvins Lehre von Menschen (Wiesbaden, 1977), esp. pp. 249ff., where B. documents the influence of Plato's Laws on Calvin. Calvin's Geneva often seems a nightmarish version of Plato's republic.
17. On the De libero arbitrio, see M. Boyle, Rhetoric and Reform: Erasmus' Civil Dispute with Luther (Cambridge, MA., 1983); on the Paraphrases, J. Chomarat, Grammaire et rhétorique chez Érasme (Paris, 1981), pp. 639-65.
18. Erasmus wrote only eleven such ennarrationes. It is noteworthy that they are all different in form and exegetical style. All were done, moreover, "on request" by someone, unlike Calvin's, which were done systematically in the course of the development of his mature positions as represented in the 1559 Institutes. On Erasmus's commentaries on Psalms, see G. Chantraine, "Érasme, lecteur des Psaumes," Colloquia Erasiana Tyronensia 2 (=CET) (Paris, 1971): 691-712.
19. The Commentary and the Institutes often reflect one another. See, e.g., Com. ad 2:9// Inst. 2.15.5; ad 2:12// 4.20.5; ad 34:6// 3.20.3ff.; 53:6// 3.20.26, etc.
20. Cf. the Preface to his Commentary, CO 31.33f.: *Itaque non modo simplex docendi ratio ubique a me servata est, sed quo longius abesset omnis ostentatio, a refutationibus ut plurimum abstinuit, ubi liberior patebat plausibilis iactantiae campus.* Calvin also, doubtless, felt it unnecessary to demonstrate his authority, seeing that he and David were very much alike, a point which he develops at considerable length in the Preface.
21. Erasmus was, of course, deeply familiar with Cicero's works. His edition of the Tusculan Disputations appeared in 1523. See C. Bene, "Érasme et

Cicéron," CET 571-9; Boyle passim.

22. See the excellent discussion by Terence Cave in The Cornucopian Text (Oxford, 1979), pp. 78-124.
23. On the "old theology"/"new theology" issue, see, e.g., J. McConica, "Erasmus and the Grammar of Consent," in Scrinium erasmianum 2, ed. J. Coppens (Leiden, 1969), pp. 77-99.

Response by John H. Leith, *Pemberton Professor of Theology*
Union Theological Seminary, Richmond VA

I have just read your paper on "Calvinism as Theologia Rhetorica." I enjoyed reading this paper as I enjoy reading everything you write. It has a freshness, a clarity, and a substantial quality which are not only good rhetoric but, in my judgement, good scholarship.

I am glad to see the renewed emphasis on Calvin as a theologian who was concerned with persuading people. So much contemporary theology is written not to persuade but to impress increasingly small groups of scholars. Jim Gustafson recently pointed out that the essays which are being reprinted today, such as those by Reinhold Niebuhr, were written not to a specialized group of scholars, but for the reading and thinking public. Most of the scholarly essays, or perhaps I should say pedantic, are no longer remembered, at least this is true in theology.

I can think of two emphases that I would like to see further developed in your paper. First, I do not believe Calvin can be understood in any of his work apart from his sense of the holy, his conviction that he had been called of God, and his awareness that he had to do with the Living God every moment of his life. I have profited greatly from your essays which indicate Calvin's anxiety and struggle with faith. I do think, however, that in moments of anxiety and doubt Calvin at least knew in his mind and in his will, if not in his heart, that he had to do with the Living God. Calvin believed that preaching and his work as a theologian were the will of God which must be carried out independently of consequences. He also believed that he had been elected by God to this particular task. I do not believe it is possible to understand Calvin's rhetoric or the impact of his preaching and teaching apart from the conviction that what he had to say was a message from God and that he himself had been called to deliver this message. I do not believe it is possible to discuss the rhetoric of Calvin apart from the passion of his personality.

This particular point has become clearer to me as I have been involved in the teaching of persons for the ministry. A sermon that is rhetorically very persuasive frequently does not carry weight apart from the convictions of the writer and speaker. I know that the passions of a speaker can be fraudulent, but I believe the personal fraudulence can be detected as is the fraudulence of the written or spoken material. Personal passion and commitment are reflected, it seems to me, in literary rhetoric as well as delivery. A second emphasis that I would add would be Calvin's insistence upon simplicity. As I read Calvin and as I read the writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Calvinists, I am more and more aware of their emphasis upon simplicity. I know a few phrases more typical of Calvin than his protest against theatrical trivials. You point out the role of eloquence which Calvin admired and which he coveted in certain situations as, for example, the eloquence of Isaiah. I appreciated your emphasis upon Calvin's use of figures and other literary devices for the effective communication of a message. This does not, it seems

to me, nullify his insistence upon simplicity. Even eloquence must be simple, that is, eloquence must serve to uncover reality and communicate truth not to decorate reality or to cover it up.

I agree with you that Calvin's sermons are not eloquent. I believe that a Calvinist may appropriately preach a more eloquent sermon than did Calvin. Yet I think any Calvinist eloquence has to be a simple eloquence, that is, an eloquence that uncovers rather than decorates or obscures truth.

I think the Calvinist eloquence is not decorative so much as it is clarity, precision, a sense of reality that compels the reader or the hearer to know that what is being communicated is real. I like to say to the annoyance of some of my friends that for the Calvinists the message must be the medium rather than the reverse. I also like to say that when the message is clearly and precisely understood and expressed, when the message communicates reality, then the spoken or written words are emotionally very moving. Clarity, precision, intelligibility and a "feel" for reality elicit an emotional or perhaps better a deeply personal response.

I do not know that these two emphases upon Calvin's awareness of the holy and upon simplicity add very much to your paper, but they are Calvinist motifs that are increasingly significant to me. I appreciate your sharing your paper with me.

Response by Karl-Heinz zur Muehlen, *Professor of Church History*
University of Bonn, Germany

RHETORIC AND THEOLOGICAL DIALECTIC

translated by W. Wuellner

1.

Bouwsma's paper outlines well the way ancient rhetoric affected Calvin and offers a vivid picture of Calvin as rhetorician. It shows convincingly the connection between persuasio and eruditio; between the humanistic exegesis and criticism of the Bible and the theological substantiation of rhetoric by means of the concept of accommodation in Calvin. Bouwsma succeeds in bringing Calvin "back to life" and bringing him back to earth again from the heights of theological abstraction. Nevertheless, the question arises, whether the connection between rhetoric and dialectic in Calvin need not be noted more strongly. The emphasis on the rhetorical character of Calvin's opus to be exegeted and the presentation of the competencies of the rhetor (artifex) in Calvin are, after all, essentially oriented toward his theological dialectic. This dialectic directs inquiry toward the truth or untruth of the utterance and not only toward the power of the utterance and its communication. Take the classical distinction concerning the artes liberales as found, for instance, in Isidor Hispalensis, Origines I, 2, 1-3:

Disciplina liberalium artium septem sunt: prima grammatica, id est loquendi peritia; secunda rhetorica, quae propter nitorem et copiam eloquentiae suae maxime in civilibus quaestionibus necessaria existimatur; tertia dialectica cognomento logica, quae disputationibus subtilissimus vera secernit a falsis...
 (followed by arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy. See H. Lausberg, Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik, 2nd. ed., Munich: Hueber, 1973, p. 34).

Rhetoric inquires into the utterance's power, grammar into the semantic and syntactic correctness, and dialectic into the truth of the utterance. Accordingly, Calvin also, necessitated by the subject matter, pushes beyond rhetoric to dialectic, i. e., to the substantive logic of theological statements, as classically presented in his Institutes.

It is therefore to be asked whether Bouwsma's statement that Calvin "was more concerned to sway a particular audience than to achieve the 'absolute balance' of a detached and systematic theology" (p. 2, above) is not too one-sided? There is, however, no question that Calvin did not develop his Institutes as an abstract of a scholastic theology. That is immediately apparent when one traces the development of the Institutes 1536-1553 based on the different editions. Nevertheless, he aimed beyond rhetoric at the truth of theological utterances and their substantively oriented logical interconnection.

This connection includes the doctrine of God (Trinity, creation,

providence), the self-disclosure of God, and humankind (independent of sin and the necessity of redemption - see Institutes, Book I). The remaining three Books of his Institutes deal with the revelation in Jesus Christ and the work of salvation as follows:

- (1) the preparation of the work of salvation in the old covenant and its fulfillment in the incarnation of the Son of God (Book II),
 - (2) the gift and appropriation of salvation through the Holy Spirit:
 - (a) the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the believers, till their perfection in life eternal (Book III),
 - (b) the external means used by the Holy Spirit to perfect this inner working and lead it to completion (Book IV).
- (See F. Wendel's German translation of Calvin's theology, p. 100.)

It is correct that without rhetoric the communication of Biblical truth remains without effect. But it is equally correct that without dialectic, i. e., the systematic illumination of the substantive theological interconnection, rhetoric threatens to become merely verbal. The arts of "bene dicendi," "recte dicendi," and "vere dicendi" are mutually required.

2.

Also in Melanchton (see e. g. W. Maurer, "Melanchtons Loci Communes von 1521 als wissenschaftliche Programmschrift. Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik der Reformationszeit," LuJ 27(1960): 1-50) there is evident the necessary connection between rhetoric and dialectic. To be sure, Melanchton at first turned against abstract, scholastic dialectics which had lost its vital connection with Biblical rhetoric, in other words, with the peculiar Biblical word of salvation. But Melanchton then, derived from the rhetorical loci of Paul's epistle to the Romans, inquires into the theological dialectic of the Bible. Thus Melanchton understands Romans first according to its rhetorical genre as oratio iudicialis. The status causae of this letter is the iustitia ex fide sine operibus; its main parts are the exordium: thanksgiving and focusing by the apostle of what lies ahead; the narratio: God's wrath over Jews and Gentiles; and finally the confirmatio: the righteousness by faith without works. Based on this rhetorical analysis of Romans, Melanchton attains to the following theological loci: De libero arbitrio; de peccato; de lege; de evangelio; de gratia; de iustificatione et de fide; de discrimine veteris ac novi testamenti; de signis (de sacramentis); de caritate; de magisteribus and de scandalo, whose theological substantive logic (Sachlogik) he presents in his Loci Communes of 1521. As the further development of the Loci shows, this number of loci does not suffice in apprehending Christian dogmatics in its scope. Melanchton, too, returns to an outline of dogmatics reminiscent of scholasticism, but his theological reflection remains tied to the peculiarity and content of the Biblical utterance. The Loci are for Melanchton not abstract, philosophical theological concepts, but basic theological concepts derived from the analysis of Biblical utterance and which in turn help in comprehending the rhetoric of the Bible and in protecting the rhetoric of preaching against theological inappropriateness.

3.

Luther's appreciation of rhetoric extends, as in Melanchton, both to exegesis and to preaching. Especially for the sermon and for the training of the preacher does Luther seek in Quintilian for decisive rhetorical help (see e. g. U. Nembach, Predigt des Evangeliums, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972, pp. 117ff.). Thus he lauds especially Quintilian before all other authors:

Ego prorsus Quintilianum fere omnibus authoribus praefero. Qui simul et instituit, simul quoque eloquentiam ministrat, id est verbo et re docet quam fidelissime.

(WA, vol. 1, 563: 9-12, no. 222.)

Quintilian teaches and himself serves the cause of eloquence. Luther also praises Quintilian's ideal oriented toward moral virtues: "Quintilianus vero unus sit, qui optimos reddat adulescentes, immo viros" (WA, 1, 563:2f.). Accordingly the Wittenberg university reform of 1518 introduces into the lecture program courses on Quintilian's "Institutio oratoria" along with the conventional lecture on Aristotle's Rhetoric. It is especially the deliberative (public appeal to action) genre as described by Quintilian, in which Luther sees references for the training of preachers and the execution of sermons. What value he attributes to Quintilian's rhetoric becomes clear also in his argumentation against Erasmus, when in it, in De servo arbitrio, he elucidates that the exclusion from theological reflection of the question for the relation of praedestinatio dei and liberum arbitrium would be equally foolish as if one were to renounce Quintilian's basic concepts (such as inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria and pronuntiatio; Quint., 3,3,1) in the analysis of the composition of a speech (WA 18, 614, 21f.). As with Calvin, one could continue to demonstrate the use of ancient rhetoric in Luther's exegesis and sermons. But Luther's use of rhetoric does also remain oriented toward theological dialectic. The classic example is Luther's critique of Zwingli's tropical interpretation of the words of the Last Supper. In Zwingli's interpretation of the text: "Hoc est corpus meum" (Luke 21:13), the est is to be interpreted as a trope, i. e., as figurative locution with the meaning of significat. Luther does not deny, however, that the Bible knows of tropical locution, as e. g. the Jesus logion: "I am the true vine" (John 15:1), but does deny that the est in the words of the Last Supper is to be interpreted tropically. Est is supposedly identical with est and not tropically to be interpreted as significat and express the real presence of Christ in the eucharist. As God became a real human being in the incarnation, so Christ encounters reality in the sacrament through word and elements. The figure of speech, alloiosis (breaking down a subject into alternatives) is also said to be unsuitable for describing the real communicatio idiomatum of divine and human natures in Christ. The question whether there is or is not a trope in the words of the Last Supper in Luke 22:19, or whether one could interpret the unio hypostatica in Christ by way of the figure of speech of alloiosis, has for Luther to be determined by the theological substantive logic (Sachlogik). Thus Luther controls the use of rhetoric by way of theological dialectic, makes use of rhetoric on the other hand in exegesis and in preaching as communication of the truth of faith.

Eruditio means for Luther not only rhetorical-humanistic learning, but

primarily knowledge of revelation:

Erudire est... quasi extra ruditatem... ducere (3,249, 12.15f.; 1513/15)

and

(mitto... Prophetas, Sapientes et Scribas - Matthew 23:34) triplex traditur et oritur Eruditio. Primo enim a Deo ipso immediate alii afflantur, sine humano magisterio, sola divina inspiratione et revelatione Eruditi, et hi sunt Prophetas, ut 2 Peter 1(:21) 'Spiritu Sancto inspirati locuti sunt sancti Dei homines' ... Secundo, non tantum a Deo, sed a Deo per homines et in voce viva: sic omnes erudiuntur ad iustitiam a Deo per ministerium hominum, et hi sunt sapientes... Tertio, neque per ministerium hominum nec tamen a solo Deo, sed ex lectione scripturae, scilicet qui legendo et meditando sese exercent ad cognitionem veritatis.

(WA 1, 30,8.10-13; 1513/14; quoted from H. Juergens, "Eruditio in Luther," ABG 14, 1971, 11-50.)

4.

These reflections on the relation of rhetoric and theological dialectic call for further elucidation in Reformation research. Bouwsma's study of Calvin's rhetoric offers a substantive contribution to this end.

Response by Jeannine Olson
Palo Alto, California

John Calvin's thought has often been treated as an abstraction, separate from the reality of the world in which he lived and the people with whom he associated. In contrast, it is a pleasure to have this work of Professor Bouwsma that treats Calvin in his historical context. What a privilege it is to read a portion of this eagerly anticipated book to which Professor Bouwsma has dedicated so much of the last years. Some time ago he stated that, so as not to prejudice himself for this book, he would read the works of Calvin himself, before allowing himself the luxury of the secondary sources. We can be assured that this is the work of a great scholar bringing to his study of Calvin a vast knowledge of Renaissance humanism and of the historical context of the times.

In this study of John Calvin as a whole person in the context of the sixteenth century what becomes clear to the trained eye is the superb humanist that Calvin was, educated in the classics and equipped with the philological tools of the third generation of humanists north of the Alps. As such he was capable in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; articulate in the vernacular; honest, clear, and precise in his scholarship. It is absurd to imagine that none of this training would have affected his theology and his biblical scholarship. This training was a part of the legacy of humanism to the Reformers, to Calvin as well as it was to Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bucer, and the others. The Reformation of the sixteenth century cannot be understood without an understanding of humanism and its contributions to the sixteenth century world of thought. Professor Bouwsma is to be thanked for articulating this clearly with precision and examples in the case of Calvin.

Central to humanist education was an emphasis on language and communication. In their writing and speaking, humanists wanted to persuade, to move emotions, to win people over, and to bend their wills. Thus humanists admired classical rhetoric and scorned medieval scholasticism, though they conceded a basic utility to dialectic. They emphasized the role of will along with reason. The rhetorical art moved affections. Among the ancients they greatly admired Quintillian and Cicero. Calvin was exposed to this in his education and reading, and he was likely to have been reinforced in the rhetorical tradition during his years in Strasbourg in association with Jean Sturm and the Academy of Strasbourg.¹

The humanist view of the importance and centrality of rhetoric naturally informed the preaching of the humanist trained Reformers. It also affected their hermeneutics and exegesis of texts as Professor Bouwsma has pointed out so well in the case of Calvin's biblical scholarship. Were the Reformers then merely humanist rhetoricians warmed over? Was there any distinction at all between humanist rhetorical theories and the evangelical Protestant use of the spoken word of the gospel, verbum evangelii vocale? This has been a debate for some time, particularly with regard to Martin Luther, but it is applicable as well to the Reformed tradition.²

Surely humanist rhetorical theories and the Protestant use of the spoken

word of the gospel were related but not identical. The similarities are readily apparent. The Reformers, like the humanists, stressed the emotional side of people more than did the scholastics. An effort has been made to relate rhetorical art of moving affections to the vivification of the individual by the Holy Spirit. The issue becomes acute over the Protestant concept of the Word. The Word is so central to Reformation thought. Indeed, the incarnation of the Word is Jesus Christ. Luther speaks frequently of the Word. He realized that the church was founded by word of mouth before the gospels were written. He considered the spoken sermon of the preacher as the Word of God. In his Table Talks Luther spoke frequently about the difference between dialectic, which convinces by syllogistic reasoning, and rhetoric, which not only carries rational conviction, but also moves people to action. For Luther, the Word was not an abstract concept but the Word communicated, people addressed, and sinners turned around. Was not Scripture for Luther the cradle of the Word?³

In the Reformed tradition as well, there was a great deal of emphasis on the Word as evidenced by the tremendous emphasis on preaching, Bible reading, and Psalm singing to the exclusion of the liturgical responses of the Mass in the worship service. What modern people would call the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the French-speaking people of that century referred to as "the Reform of the Word" or "of the Gospel." They used Word and Gospel almost interchangeably in everyday conversation as evidenced by passages in the notarial documents of the period.⁴ What caught their eye, what they noticed as different and new in the Protestant Reformation, was the preaching of the Word and the access to the Bible. They were caught up in this new discovery of the Word, attending to sermons whenever the occasion arose and attacking illiteracy so that everyone could read the Bible. They, perhaps, did not notice when a sermon was not rhetorical in the traditional classical sense, because of what for them was a new discovery: the text of Scripture preached in a manner relevant to their daily life.

There is much that is similar between the Reformation emphasis on the Word and humanist concentration on communication. In addition, recent studies of Reformation preaching have shown the extent to which rhetorical principles were put to use by Reformation preachers. There is, however, a marked difference between the humanist view of persuasion and the Reformation view of conversion. For the Reformers, in contrast to the humanist rhetoricians, only the Holy Spirit can turn around from unbelief to faith.⁵

Professor Bouwsma mentions the Holy Spirit on pages three, nine, ten, and twelve of his paper. He comments on how Calvin felt that rhetorical skills were a gift of the Holy Spirit on page three. On page nine he mentions that Jeremiah, "though not taught in the schools of the rhetoricians," was taught a rhetorical device by the Holy Spirit. On page twelve, he mentions that Calvin felt that "the effect of a sermon depends on a collaboration between the preacher and the Holy Spirit." Thus, for Calvin, the Spirit both gives rhetorical skills and collaborates in getting the message through to the listener. One would like more of Calvin's view of the importance of the Holy Spirit in this paper unless Professor Bouwsma is suggesting that Calvin's conception of the role of the Holy Spirit is less important or direct than one would ordinarily allow.⁶

By way of suggestion it might be helpful to include introductory comments on the role of rhetoric in the thought and preaching of others of the magisterial reformers in comparison and contrast to Calvin. One could argue that Calvin in this paper appears somewhat more unique than he actually was simply by virtue of the exclusive focus on him. Obviously there would not be room to go far afield in such a carefully worded work.

Yet, overall, within the paper's focus on Calvin, the reader comes away enriched. One is particularly thankful for Professor Bouwsma's description of the flexibility of Calvin's biblical interpretation. Perhaps it is because the moral code of sixteenth century Geneva seems so rigid to the modern mentality that it is difficult for moderns to understand that in other areas Calvin was willing to withhold judgement, to be prudent, and to resist speaking definitively on every issue. Another emphasis that is appreciated in this work is Professor Bouwsma's description of Calvin's belief in God's accommodation of God's word to human weakness in any age. This is so central to Calvin's thought, especially in his sacramental theology, and deserves more attention than it has had.

What then of the conclusion to Professor Bouwsma's paper, that Calvin composed few eloquent sermons? Surely, Professor Bouwsma is correct that the exegetical method of the Reformed Tradition that clung to a close consideration of a sequence of biblical verses hardly allowed for the development of any one theme. Plugging through a book of the Bible verse by verse must give a preacher a sense of the need to move on, to make progress, and not to dwell on any given verse too long. The preacher could not cover many verses if he went far afield or developed any given point extensively. Perhaps at this point, the Reformed tradition was hampered by the lack of a lectionary. On the other hand, the listeners seemed pleased by Reformed preaching. They came out in numbers, and often at risk to themselves, to hear Reformed preaching in countries, such as France, that intermittently persecuted Reformed preachers and congregations.

As for Calvin himself, many in the sixteenth century valued his sermons more than his Institutes of the Christian Religion. The sermons were translated into many different languages. In fact, there was great hope that the publication of Calvin's sermons would be a source of income to the poor. The deacons of the French Fund for the Poor Foreigners hired a man named Denis Raguenier to copy down Calvin's sermons in a form of shorthand as he preached them. Denis worked for over a decade, from August 25, 1549 to the early 1560s. After his death the deacons hired a successor to continue the task. Sunday after Sunday, several times a week, Calvin's sermons were faithfully copied at the expense of the deacons who hoped they would realize a profit in publication. Calvin averaged over four sermons per week in a period of ten and one-half years prior to February 21, 1560. The results were so voluminous that storage of the sermons became a problem. In the early seventeenth century, the deacons turned Calvin's sermons over to the Academy of Geneva which eventually became the University of Geneva. In the early nineteenth century, the University Library sold some of the manuscripts. Some of these were recovered. Other sermons disappeared with no clear record. Many sermons were in this way simply lost. It has been argued that the librarians simply needed more space on the shelves. The sermons that remain today are still in the process of

being edited. They have not all yet appeared in print in the original French, to say nothing of in translation. This digression on the history of the sermons of Calvin points out that whatever a modern's judgement of Calvin's sermons, the sixteenth century considered them worthwhile enough to preserve for posterity. Subsequent centuries have not always been as appreciative. Perhaps Calvin spoke better to his own age, in the spirit of decorum, than to our own.⁷

Another factor should be mentioned. Calvin is more fully developed in his rhetorical style in the formats than his sermons. A classic example of his humanist rhetorical style is his letter of dedication to Francis I of France in his introduction to his Institutes of the Christian Religion. Presumably he had time to compose this letter and to work it over. This may not have been the case with many of his sermons. He preached and lectured more frequently than most modern preachers. In addition, he sat on the Consistory weekly, met with the Company of pastors, was visited by visitors to the city and parishioners, did his scholarly work, and carried on a voluminous correspondence. The notarial documents of the era reveal that he was also present in people's homes as a formal witness to legal transactions, contracts and the like. He apparently had some social life, and he lived with his brother Antoine and Antoine's family. He was often sick, especially during the last years of his life, and he died a relatively young man, 55 years old (1509-1564). Where could he have cut corners to save time? Would it be possible to suggest that some of the sermons of Calvin might have been composed in haste or not at all? Surely a master of language such as Calvin would have had an advantage in extemporaneous preaching, but even the very eloquent can benefit from time to prepare. Perhaps he was not always as well-prepared as he might have liked to have been. Could this help account for sermons that could be judged by some readers as less than eloquent? On the other hand, for the historian who is seeking other information from these sermons, they are a treasure. For the mentalite of the age, the sermons of Calvin reveal a great deal about the attitudes and values of the sixteenth century, and they reveal some of him as a person.

NOTES

1. For Sturm and rhetoric see Maretta D. Nikolaou, Sprache als Welterschliessung und Sprache als Norm Überlegungen zu R. Agricola und J. Sturm (Neuried: Hieronymus Verlag, 1984); for a general work on style and rhetoric see Richard A. Lanham, The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance (New Haven, Conn., 1976); for rhetoric and humanism see Karl-Otto Apel, Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico, 3. Auflage, Bonn 1980, 20; vrgl. auch s. 22; for rhetoric in German humanism see Klaus Dockhorn, Rhetorica movet. "Protestantischer Humanismus und Karolingische Renaissance," in Rhetorik. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland vom 16-20 Jahrhundert (Frankfurt a. M., 1974), pp. 17-42; Macht und Wirkung der Rhetorik. Vier Aufsätze zur Ideengeschichte der Vormoderne (Bad Homberg, 1968); see also Heinz Otto Burger, Renaissance - Humanismus - Reformation: Deutsche Literatur im Europäischen Kontext (Bad Homberg v. d. H., Berlin and Zurich, 1969). On Calvin see John Bray, "The Value of Words in the Theology of Calvin and Beza," Sixteenth Century Journal 4(1973):77-86; in a more general vein see Caesara

Vasoli, "Loci Communes and the Rhetorical and Dialectical Tradition," in J. C. MacLellan, Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Italian Reform (Waterloo, 1980).

2. For Luther and rhetoric see Ulrich Nembach, Predigt des Evangeliums: Luther als Prediger, Pedagoge und Rhetor (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), pp. 117-174. On the issue of a distinguishing theological content from a rhetorical principle see Gerhard Ebeling, Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973). This book is a translation of Einführung in Theologische Sprachlehre (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971); Ebeling is challenged by Klaus Dockhorn, "Luthers Glaubensbegriff und die Rhetorik. Zu Gerhard Ebeling's Einführung in Theologische Sprachlehre," Linguistica Biblica 21/22(February, 1973): 19-39; see also Birgit Stolt, "Docere, delectare und movere bei Luther. Analysiert anhand der 'Predigt, dass man Kinder zur Schulen halten solle,'" Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift fuer Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 44:1(1970): 433-474.
3. Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther, Humanism and the Word," Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 65(Winter 1965): 3-24.
4. Archives d'Etat de Geneve, see especially the notary Jean Ragueau who recorded many of the legal documents of the French community in Geneva in the mid-sixteenth century.
5. Spitz, "Luther, Humanism and the Word," p. 12.
6. H. Jackson Forstman, Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).
7. Bernard Cagnebin, "L'Incroyable Histoire des Sermons de Calvin," Bulletin de la Societe d'Histoire et d'Archeologie de Geneve 10(1955): 311-34.

MINUTES OF THE COLLOQUY OF 28 SEPTEMBER 1986

List of Participants

Professors at the *University of California, Berkeley*

William Anderson (*Classics*)
William J. Bouwsma (*History*)
Julian Boyd (*English*)
John Coolidge (*English*)
James Jarrett (*Education*)
Daniel F. Melia (*Rhetoric*)

Professors at the *Graduate Theological Union*

John A. Coleman (*Sociology*)
Valerie DeMarinis (*Psychology*)
James Duke (*History*)
John Endres (*Old Testament*)
Mary Lyons (*Homiletics*)
J. Hilary Martin (*History*)
Ted Peters (*Theology*)
Sandra Schneiders (*Spirituality*)
Claude Welch (*History*)
Antoinette Wire (*New Testament*)
Wilhelm Wuellner (*New Testament*)

Guests

Beverly Bouwsma
David Bartlett (*New Testament, Homiletics*)
Sandra Luft (*San Francisco State University*)
James J. Murphy (*University of California, Davis*)

Students

Tim Nuveen
Andrew Porter
Eloise Rosenblatt

MINUTES OF THE COLLOQUY OF 28 SEPTEMBER 1986

The Discussion

Wuellner: Instead of indulging in the temptation we all face in scholarly meetings - to reply to our critics - I have suggested to Prof. Bouwsma that he identify, for the sake of stimulating the discussion, what he sensed from the responses to be the central issues we might want to discuss, rather than issues for him to take a position on. What are your recommendations?

Bouwsma: My first question has to do with the differences between rhetorical and dialectical theology, with particular attention to the Boyle paper; this has a sub-question, can rhetorical and dialectical theology be combined according to the formula of Prof. zur Muehlen? My second question had to do with the originality of the rhetorical theology of the Renaissance; in this question I sense some disagreement between Boyle and Camporeale on the one hand, and Evans on the other. The third question: in what ways did Calvin's humanism contribute to the substance of his theology? Fourth, what does it contribute to the understanding of Calvin to recognize a large rhetorical element in his discourse? Fifth, were there, as I believe, two Calvins? That's a position that doesn't really emerge in this paper, although I tried to hint at it in my first note. It's more important in grasping what my paper is trying to do than that note suggests. And sixth, is it true, as Camporeale suggests, that Luther has not received comparable treatment?

I want to begin by expressing my gratitude for the gracious tone of the responses to my paper, and I have found them variously stimulating and helpful. To put the paper in some perspective, I should explain that it is adapted from one chapter of a fairly long and general book. Some respondents wished that I had said more about one matter or another that was simply touched on in the present paper. About this, I can only say that the book is not a monograph but a general interpretation of Calvin as a quite typical sixteenth century intellectual. This means that I have had to make choices in writing the book - choices about how deeply to get into particular matters without losing sight of my general line of thought. The decisions I have made have been often difficult, and doubtless, I have made some wrong choices, but they were deliberate. Of course, I agree that on a multitude of points, more could be said.

Other respondents pointed to significant additional lines of thought that I didn't touch on in the paper. For example, Charles Trinkaus asks about Calvin's views about God's image and likeness, or John Leith asks what of Calvin's sense of the holy. Here I can only point out that the book consists of fourteen chapters plus an introduction, and I think that most of what my respondents were calling for has probably been touched on elsewhere in the book, though not necessarily in ways that they would find adequate. Above all, having established as well as I could the depth of Calvin's humanism, I try to work out its larger implications for his thought on other matters in subsequent chapters, though not necessarily those aspects of his thought most emphasized by theologians. My own interest is not primarily in the history of theology - I am not a theologian - but in the ways in which the sixteenth century and its preoccupations marked Calvin's thought.

This concern shaped my book in a deeper way as it influenced its organization. In my introductory note, I described what precedes the chapter on Calvin's humanism as dealing with the philosophical elements in his thought. The chapters following that chapter deal with his rhetorical culture. I was trying here to point to a profound tension in the sixteenth century generally, with deeper sources in the cultural history of the West, which I think was experienced with peculiar poignancy by Calvin. This tension resulting involves major contradictions which have been generally contained but have tended to break out in moments of crisis, such as that of the sixteenth century. For me, then, Calvin - and in this he is typical of the intellectuals of his century - was torn between two antithetical cultures or impulses but he was unable, given the intellectual resources of his time, either to reconcile, or to choose between them. So there were two sides of Calvin as incompatible as, and substantially resembling, the positions of Socrates and Protagoras. His own Calvinism can thus be described as the product, chiefly through rhetoric, of an effort to integrate these two sides of himself. Looking ahead from Calvin, it seems to me that the familiar rigidities of Calvinist orthodoxy attempted to hold these polarities together, chiefly, however, by dialectic rather than by rhetoric, so that Calvinist orthodoxy, in this respect, marks a significant deviation from the thought of Calvin himself. This attempt was reasonably successful, I think, until the eighteenth century when Calvinism broke apart into Deism and Unitarianism on the one hand, and Evangelical Pietism on the other, both already latent in Calvin himself.

I make this point at more length than I had intended because a number of responses to my paper seem to me to be based on the assumption of a single Calvin, and my critics then assume that they and I are in disagreement. I can only reply that I do not disagree that there was such a Calvin as they describe; I only insist that there was, in addition, another very different Calvin.

I would like to take one moment for a minor clarification. Jeannine Olson recalls in her response, that I "stated that I would read Calvin himself before reading the works of scholars who had written about him." I probably did say something of the sort, but since I have been teaching courses on the Reformation for nearly forty years, I hope with some responsibility to Calvin scholarship, I hope I was neither as innocent or as arrogant as this statement might imply. When I decided to work on Calvin, I had to develop a strategy for dealing with the mass of material about him. The Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College, for example, has over three thousand books and more than twelve thousand articles on Calvin - so choices have to be made here, too.

Shall we start with the question whether it is plausible to argue that there were two Calvins?

Coleman: I would like just a point of clarification. I may have missed it, but when you were talking about the two polarities in Calvin, I am not certain I got the clarity I would like to have gotten. Your ideal typification of those two poles, could you clarify?

Bouwsma: I've never been able to find a set of antitheses that is fully satisfactory for my purpose. The one between philosophy and rhetoric makes a

start, Hellenism and Hebraism represents a further possibility, and perhaps also traditional and modern; and there are several others.

Peters: I have a basically historical question. It's a question that issues out of the statement you make on page 6, at the end of the large paragraph, just before the bottom. "Against the claim of the Roman church to have settled the matter, he denied, with no sign of distress, the existence of a fixed New Testament canon." I went to the section of the Institutes on that: section 14, book 4, chapter 9, and the general context of that has to do with what he believes to be the scandalous methods of interpretation used by the Church up to that time. And then he says, "They bring forth as evidence, an ancient list called canon, which they say came from the judgement of the Church. But I ask once more, in what Council was that canon promulgated? Here they must remain mute. However, I should like to know, furthermore, what sort of canon they think it is. For I see that it was little agreed on among each of the writers. And if what Jerome says ought to have weight, the books of Maccabees, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and the like, are to be thrown back into the rank of the Apocrypha." It seems to me, the force of the argument in that section, has to do with the authority of the Roman Church to decide what the canon is. What I think remains ambiguous is whether or not Calvin believed that there was, in fact, a fixed canon - perhaps fixed by some other source. My question is, did Calvin believe in a fixed canon at all? You are suggesting that he didn't. The significance of this is, I think, when we get to Westminster in 1643, we get a statement that there is a fixed canon. The criterion there is inspiration. Inspired books belong in the canon; whereas uninspired books belong outside. Westminster places the Apocrypha outside the canon because they are uninspired. What is the relationship of Calvin's rather flippant remark about the Apocrypha and what comes later? My long range concern is, what is the relationship between Calvin himself and the Presbyterianism that follows later? Could you add anything, perhaps, to this as to whether Calvin, perhaps somewhere else, affirmed or denied the fixity of the canon?

Bouwsma: What I note in the first place about the passage in the Institutes which you have just read is that he does not, at that point, insist that there was a canon other than that defined by the Roman Church. I was also thinking at that point - I don't know quite how to deal with this - about a remark passed on by Jean Bodin who reported in his Methodus Calvin's reservations about the Book of Revelation, which he seems to have associated - rather shrewdly - with Jewish apocalyptic. Although I've never been able to locate Calvin's alleged remarks about it, it is curious that he never commented on that book, never preached sermons on it, as far as I know, and, indeed, if he cited it, the citations are extremely rare.

Wire: I have another kind of a question that may lead in a different direction than you want to go. Or it may be something you deal with in one of those thirteen chapters of your book which you don't want to focus on this evening. You speak about the different Calvins. I'm interested in the different audiences of Calvin. Does the rhetoric in his sermons reflect a different aspect of society than that we see in his commentaries or his Institutes? Might that tell us something about Geneva in that period, or about those who were fleeing France? Can you speak to that question?

Bouwsma: It's a good question, and it's one I've been thinking about. I can identify a number of different audiences. I think that there were at least two different audiences for the Institutes: in my view, the primary audience for the first edition of the Institutes was himself. Written after his student days were over, it was his first effort to make a statement of what he believed at the point where he was extremely uncertain and unsettled in various ways. The first audience was himself, although afterwards he appended the letter to Francis the First. He thought of it, in subsequent editions, as a text book in theology for fairly advanced students.

The sermons, of course, were delivered to the burgers of Geneva. But the commentaries, I think, to that audience before which he felt most comfortable, that is, relatively advanced ministerial candidates and ministers, most of whom were French speaking, and in the later stages, refugees from France - his own country. I think he was never comfortable in Geneva. But with this group, he was really comfortable. I relied very heavily on the commentaries because I think he was most likely to reveal what was really on his mind before this group. There are differences among the works that seem to neglect their different audiences. The sermons are notably lacking in theological abstraction. There's very little effort to deal with the mysteries of the Trinity in the sermons. And the sermons are also much more moralistic than the commentaries; they resemble in this respect sermons in the Church before the Reformation. The Pamphlets, of course, are still another matter. They were polemical, I guess, to stir up the faithful.

Wuellner: That's somewhat different from Boyle's insistence that there were three spheres: the first is the public domain where rhetoric shapes the community, even a whole culture; the second is the private domain of an individual person in self expression; and the third sphere, the communion with God (see Boyle, p. 23). I take it the audience issue is related to Boyle's three spheres. The issue in Calvin's sermons is whether he actually spoke to the burgers as a political group, or whether he spoke to them in terms of personal edification.

Bouwsma: Sometimes the sermons can be very personal. At one point, for example, in one of the sermons on Job, I found him apologizing to his congregation for having spoken grossly, as he put it, of the human body, as if he had forgotten that this, too, had been created by God. It's a nice illustration, also, of the tension between the two Calvins. There is one Calvin who does believe that the human body is gross, and is upset by it; then there is the other Calvin who's carrying on this discourse with himself about the same matter and insisting - sometimes in quite rhapsodic terms - about the wonders and the beauty of the human body. So even with a group before which I think he often felt quite uneasy, which he had often found unfriendly, there can be these wonderful little moments of revelation.

Peters: What did the humanists, in general, think about the human body - just the ordinary human body that we have, not the exalted one of the Greek artists? Was Calvin, in a sense, part of the milieu on that particular concern?

Bouwsma: Humanists speak, as Calvin might say, grossly of the body sometimes, and sometimes they speak in great awe and appreciation of the body. I think

what's important is you can almost see an increase in the tendency to speak positively. You find expressions of appreciation of a kind that are not very common earlier.

Wuellner: The tension you see in Calvin as representative of the early sixteenth century maintaining a precarious balance - is that tension as you have indicated earlier a renewal or extension of the tension that goes back to pre-Christian times; a tension that cracked the classical West; that reverberates through the centuries, and pops up in Western culture again and again?

Bouwsma: My impression is that this tension is indeed perennial, and I certainly agree that it existed in earlier centuries, before the Renaissance. But it does seem to become, for various reasons, more intense then, and above all to approach the level of consciousness, as humanistic historical perspective begins to make it possible for sixteenth century intellectuals like Calvin to begin to recognize and to disentangle the two strands in their heritage.

Martin: You did use the words, when you talked about the tension in the first place, you used the names of Socrates and Protagoras - I'm afraid that confused me a bit. I'm not sure how Protagoras was being used at this point.

Bouwsma: In talking about these matters, one cannot escape using ideal types. This is why I shy away, somewhat, from Hellenism and Hebraism because this is to identify ideal types too closely with particular historical cultures. As we all know, Greek culture was not homogeneous, and as we can now recognize even the Biblical documents are more eclectic than was recognized by earlier generations. When I first contrasted Socrates and Protagoras, I was trying to suggest one of the central tensions within Greek culture, the tension between philosophy and rhetoric. Protagoras was, of course, a rhetorician - a professional rhetorician.

Martin: The truth, in a sense, is not discovered except in the rhetorical discussion?

Bouwsma: I think that there are dimensions of Greek culture - notably in Sophism and tragedy - which come close to what seems to me most profound in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; on the other hand there are some areas in Scripture which are closer to philosophy.

Coolidge: I have what is probably more of an observation than a question. The opposition on which this chapter is structured I take to be the opposition between the closed fist of logic and the open hand of rhetoric, and this way of framing it leads to a kind of puzzle which I think maybe could be avoided. How does it happen that since we can demonstrate that Calvin is very attentive to, and appreciative of, eloquence - both in scripture and in his own practice - how does it happen that he does not characteristically produce eloquent sermons? The dichotomy between rhetoric and logic can be thought of in a somewhat different way. The logical order of treating any subject is to take the first principles first and deduce corollaries according to their logical dependence, and arrive at a structure of thought which is scholastic. Thus

Calvin at the beginning of the Institutes, in the first chapter, which begins with "Know thyself," acknowledges that if we were following the logical order, we should start with the attributes of God. But, he says, we are not to follow the logical order here but what he calls the "order of teaching." For that, we begin where we are - namely, with ourselves - and with our own experience, and that's the explanation for his beginning with "Know thyself." I don't think that that attentiveness to the "order of teaching" is discussed in terms of decorum of rhetoric, but it might be. One aspect of decorum is that the way you arrange your message is adapted to the audience, and that means the condition of your audience in all respects - in other words, the historical condition. You note that he does appreciate that aspect of decorum constantly. The "order of teaching" could involve the kind of consideration which Calvin could have gotten from Paul where he speaks about starting with milk for babes, but says now I am going to give you meat. So that the idea of the "order of teaching" may become a conception of teaching as nurturing. You are dealing with beginners to begin with, but it's not beginners as such, in the sense of intellectual beginners, so much as it is people whose assimilation of the complex of belief is just beginning. The "order of teaching" could be expressed in terms of a kind of progressive conception of decorum. This becomes important, I think, in one way when Calvin finally gets - well past the center of the Institutes - to the subject of predestination. It's interesting that he doesn't get to it until fairly late, and he says quite explicitly and at much length how diffident we are to be about approaching this subject. In fact, he as much as says, "I shouldn't be talking about this." Logically, however, predestination is the king pin of the whole Calvinist system. I would say the turning point is not the eighteenth century but the early seventeenth, because from that point on the logical premise predestination becomes the battleground, becomes the criterion - are you a Calvinist, or aren't you? It is when Calvinists are forced to shift from the "order of teaching" to the logical order in their apologetics, that the Calvinist system develops this kind of inhuman rigor.

Bouwsma: There are few humanists who did not talk about pedagogy, and although Calvin wrote no treatise on the subject, he constantly referred to pedagogy, beginning with his early commentary on Seneca's De clementia, where he repeats humanist platitudes directed against beating boys as a way of getting them to learn. He talks a lot about, but in scattered passages, the adaptation of the lesson to the capacity of the learner.

Wuellner: But that changes when the dialectic part wins out again over against the rhetorical in dominating the system, doesn't it, when you no longer care for the audience as the rhetorician does?

Bouwsma: Yes, and a nice symbol of that is that Calvinism was taught to students in Geneva and elsewhere not in the vernacular of Calvin himself but in the scholastic Latin of Francois Turretin.

Murphy: Some scattered observations on the pedagogical matter: Calvinist pedagogy never could escape the fifteen hundred year old tradition - in fact, you cite Quintilian. The basic pedagogical matter, the day to day work, did not change substantially from the time of Donatus and Priscian to long past Calvin. My aunt went to school in Watsonville, California, and underwent a

program that Quintilian would have approved - and if in Watsonville, then why not the world? It's one of the longest lasting phenomena in western culture and the commonalities in the pedagogy are far more important, it seems to me, than the differences. We're talking dialectically today about Charles' metaphorical term - theologia rhetorica - we are mixing our two modes even as we start this discussion. Whatever metaphorical thinking you want to say about Peter Ramus, he prospered in Calvinist areas; he was denied, indexed in Catholic areas; then he was transported to America - one of our colleagues said that Peter Ramus may be more important than Calvin to American Calvinism.

Wuellner: What are Ramus's dates?

Murphy: He was killed on August 26, 1572. I don't know enough about Calvin's texts or sermons to be able to speak with confidence about this. It seems to me in respect to his sermons, for one thing, he is in clear rejection of the medieval sermon process - the thematic sermon - which was built upon amplification. That medieval mode is deliberately rejected by Calvin, initially by Luther, reintroduced by Luther, carried on by Sturm, taught by Melancthon. Calvin is clearly reverting to a pre-patristic form which is more like a commentary which enables him at any one point to be audience-centered if he wishes without contaminating the whole process. But in respect to the pedagogy, he could not reject it; there apparently has never been a better system for kids to learn language. I imagine that Calvin would agree that the whole purpose of the process was not to teach Latin or to teach French, but to teach the habit of language use. It's transferrable across cultures, nationalities and vernaculars for that reason. I don't even know how to ask the question about Ramus and Calvinism. It's clear enough from the point of view of rhetorical history, just tracking books printed and how many editions and so on, that Calvinism and Ramism went right along, just like the administrators went along with the Roman Army in the Empire. Surely that is a major matter to consider in looking at his so-called rhetorical theology, because he is taking a certain stance in respect of what language is - but he doesn't write treatises about language, he uses language, and that's what you're trying to reconstruct so carefully. I don't know how to phrase that question except that it certainly needs to be asked in some way. I came here hoping that I would hear who has answered it.

Wuellner: I, too, sense from the phrase in your title you took from Trinkaus that there was a significant shift from a more philosophically oriented theologia hermeneutica to theologia rhetorica, that is, for application, audience rather than ideas and themes oriented. But I sense from what you shared in your paper and what I got from the responses that the Ramist breakup was really already in the works around 1500 and didn't really have to wait for Ramus to crystallize it.

Murphy: I think it's quite clear if you track Ramus's ideas back - some of them are in the 1543 attacks on Aristotle, those two books he published in that year - they are only one step away from Agricola, only one step past Agricola. And of course Agricola had lectured in Paris when Ramus was a student.

Bouwsma: My knowledge of Ramus is very slight, but I have the impression he was attractive to Calvinists because he was associated with method. He

offered, therefore, to Calvinists - and I am proposing this as a kind of hypothesis - something that Calvin had not given them. That is, there was a sense, and probably a growing sense after Calvin's death, that Calvin was insufficiently methodical. That has something to do with the kind of Calvin that I have been presenting. Ramism promised a kind of integration, to draw the two sides of Calvin together so that people could persuade themselves that he was a systematic thinker in a mode that seemed increasingly attractive as the sixteenth century advanced.

Melia: For Calvinists there are two attractive things about Ramus. One of them is his serious claims as a philosopher; the other is that his method does provide a defensible method that is universally applicable. This is, I think, the usefulness and attractiveness of Ramus to certain philosophical positions. "Ramism" is not a falsification of Ramus's ideas - it is a legitimate carrying out of Ramus's ideas - and that makes it very attractive politically and rhetorically to develop in Calvinism, if you will,. It does provide a defensible method which is potentially universalizable and not one that can be locked up, in the way scholasticism can, by professionals.

Coleman: I want to get back to a historical question about the two Calvins. First, let me state what I take it your argument is, and if I misappropriate the argument, I want you to correct me. Calvin as a sixteenth century intellectual of a certain caliber - one assumes he was not unique in this, there are other sixteenth century intellectuals who would be caught in the same kind of difficulty, the inability to reconcile these polar opposites of rhetoric and logic and they were geniuses in that they at least lived with it. Inasmuch as there was a way to deal with it, you are finding somehow rhetoric was more overarching, and that's the way Calvin would try to put them together, but even so, somehow he could not fully reconcile the polarities. Am I correct so far? As I heard your presentation earlier, you argue that by the eighteenth century we get Deism on the one hand, and Evangelical Pietism on the other, we get a split. Now, I am hearing you proclaim that not very much later in the sixteenth century, lots of people are already experiencing the split. So, I guess what I need to know is, what is it about the earlier period of the sixteenth century that makes your claim about Calvin typical of a great intellectual - not a hack - as opposed to the others who cannot reconcile these poles as later it could not be done?

Bouwsma: Sixteenth-century thinkers were generally unable to recognize what was troubling them, although on some subjects their distress seems especially acute. One of these is their anthropology, which I have found particularly useful to illustrate the problem. Calvin believed that the traditional image of the human personality as a hierarchy of discrete faculties ruled by intelligence or reason was objectively, scientifically true. He could not question this because he did not see it as a cultural artifact inherited from remote antiquity. He had to accept it. On the other hand, he was increasingly preoccupied with something he had encountered in the Scriptures that's called the heart. And you see him working in the most painful way at figuring out how the heart fits into this objective, scientific description. He associated it now with one faculty, and now with another. It was extremely important to him that he couldn't really figure out how human being is organized. It bothered him, made him extremely anxious. And I think that what happened in the latter

part of the sixteenth century - in a counter-reformation, which was as much Protestant as Catholic - was an effort to escape from this dilemma by a return to an intellectualization that had been largely rejected by Renaissance humanism. The later sixteenth century, and the seventeenth even more, saw a return to various kinds of system building. Aristotle was, in certain quarters, not immediately well regarded. So people who were prejudiced against Aristotle might turn to Ramus. But by the early seventeenth century, almost everybody was an Aristotelian. I don't know what happens to this problem of the heart in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Wuellner: Ask the Pietists a few decades later and they will tell you!

Bouwsma: That's right, it emerges again and that's my point about what happens in the eighteenth century.

Wuellner: But doesn't Boyle in her response to you point out that even in the Dominican tradition, and in the late medieval tradition as a whole, there was tension between the intellect and the heart?

Bouwsma: I absolutely agree. I don't think it was their discovery - or Calvin's. But in the sixteenth century it seems to have bothered people more.

Wuellner: But reflections on the tension between intellect and heart did have a "system."

Luft: I have a question related to the importance of the heart in Calvin's anthropology. It concerns the distinction between the dialectical and rhetorical traditions, and the identification of those traditions with Socrates and Protagoras. Both are classical sources. Boyle contrasts the classical tradition of rhetorical eloquence, which "lauded speech as the cultural act," with the view of speech as a "theological act," the end of which is conversion (p. 23). She identifies the latter with the tradition of "charitable mysticism," and suggests that that tradition may be a source of Calvin's rhetorical theology (pp. 27-28). An awareness of the power of language was an intimate part of a theology identifying God with language and divine language with act; and of an anthropology in which one's relation to God was a response of the heart to the Word. What is being suggested is that this awareness had its origins as much in the Judeo-Christian tradition as in the sophistic. I wonder if you would comment?

Bouwsma: I don't really know enough about that.

Martin: Heart is clearly a metaphor in this discussion, and Calvin would be having a problem trying to determine how various kinds of activity should be organized and constructed. In some ways, heart becomes one of those metaphors that begins to suggest to him the possibility of some way of rethinking it. Heart is not always necessarily the seat of the emotions. It's sometimes the seat of the intellect in particular cultures. We tend to think that heart is associated with certain kinds of volitional or loving relationships. That's not always true. It is a metaphor that typifies or crystalizes certain activities which are more difficult to explain. Now I don't know exactly where Calvin's problems were with this. To know something and to know something is

good, are again quite separate kinds of activities, and to know that something is relevant to a person which a rhetorician is trying to do, trying to make something relevant so that a person will accept it and then adopt their point of view. These again can be attributed to certain parts of the anatomy. Calvin is rhetorical, but presumably he's trying to convince people to adopt points of view he already holds. He's trying to persuade them to something he has already himself adopted. He doesn't assume that this rhetoric is producing the result. He's trying to bring his group into his particular line, isn't that what we mean here?

Bouwsma: That's true. I think I might add, to bring together the two matters you were talking about, that Renaissance humanists were constantly saying that rhetoric is the means by which something is communicated from one heart to another heart, that is, from the interior, from what is central to one human being to another.

Murphy: I don't think that was so universally true that it should be taken as true of all humanist rhetoric. The typical formula in fact says "mind and heart," the typical formula often quotes Augustine on that.

Bouwsma: Well, I would suggest that that's because the typical humanist is not an ideal type.

Boyd: Isn't rhetoric always directed at changing the will, and therefore necessarily toward an action, whereas this cognitive stuff only adds to your stock of beliefs? Isn't that something that you find at all times? That that's what the heart is? Namely a change in the will is necessarily involved?

Martin: The will is only changed if your mind is changed and you accept it.

Boyd: But only if you are an intellectual, and I am.

Nuveen: Change can be of at least two kinds. One can be a change in direction and another can be a change in acceleration.

In your list of questions, you ask what the unique contribution of humanism was to the substance of Calvin's theology. I would hate for the evening to evaporate without us paying more attention to that.

Bouwsma: I'm prepared to offer some suggestions, but perhaps I should wait on yours. In the chapter you read, there is some evidence of the importance of Calvin's humanism for his understanding of the Incarnation. His answer to the question cur Deus homo? is quite different from Anselm's. Now it may be similar to that of others who were not, in some sense, humanists. And I would be happy to learn about that.

Wuellner: In light of Prof. Boyle's observation the mystery of that Incarnation was then not so much a mystery for which faith seeks understanding in the Anselmian sense, but a faith that looks for an energizing of the will, for commitment and action. What the people of those centuries were struggling with had a dual legacy. What I got from Boyle's response is that the legacy was mixed, on the one side heavy with emphasis on the intellect, in the

Dominican tradition, on the other side increasingly vocal on the emotive, experiential aspects in the medieval tradition bequeathed to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. What I gather from someone like Perelman in his New Rhetoric,¹ is that one can not really shake free from this mixed legacy until one gets out of the traditional metaphysical framework into something more ontological, phenomenological. In other words, the whole age of Calvin struggled with the legacy of traditional metaphysics; it wasn't only Calvin struggling there. The whole fifteenth and sixteenth century was struggling with this. The struggle continued until the advent of the Enlightenment.

Murphy: I don't know if this follows from this question or not, but I was curious when I read the paper. The Augustinian influence seems to be implicit in what you say, rather than explicit. At one point, on page three in the middle, you quote Calvin as saying that eloquence is a "special grace of God." The question is about Augustine's divine light which enabled special grace to enter the speaker, coupled with the problem you mentioned earlier that every preacher faces - that God's grace is a necessary element of success that his rhetoric makes possible - and you couple with that, then, the concept of predestination. To what extent is this rhetorical inner light, inner grace, analogous to predestination in which God decides something and it acts out on us just as that grace acts out on the speaker?

Coolidge: Isn't Calvin using the "special grace" in the sense that this is something which is indeed God-given but has no reference at all to your state of salvation?

Martin: Wasn't a loud voice a special grace?

Coolidge: No, a "special grace" is given for the nonce to enable you to function, to perform a service. A favorite example is Saul who was made another man for a specific purpose. That is not to say anything one way or the other about the state of the person with respect to salvation, so predestination would have nothing to do with it.

Murphy: It would seem to be consistent with the inner light that makes a person predestined to be a speaker. There are many ministeries, Paul says.

Coolidge: Predestined to be a speaker? I don't think that "predestination" is usually used in that sense.

Murphy: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Arthur Dimsdale was predestined to do something.

Bouwsma: Eloquence as a grace has to be understood in a more pedestrian way. Calvin was responding to those people - scholastic theologians, I suppose - who denied that there is any value in eloquence at all and regard it, in fact, as meretricious. If it's a gift from anybody, it's a gift from the devil, and it's generally used for bad purposes. Calvin, I think, in saying it is a grace of God, was simply in a very concrete way replying to that kind of attack on

1. C. Perelman, "The Philosophy of Pluralism and the New Rhetoric," in The New Rhetoric and the Humanities: Essays on Rhetoric and its Application (Dordrecht/London: Reidel, 1979), pp. 62-72.

rhetoric - although he made it, himself.

Martin: Poets should be excluded from the state, according to Plato.

Endres: You spoke about the importance of his reading of the biblical text, the development of his notion of heart, and that concern. I just wondered - we have not talked about this very much, but how important is his devotion to the biblical text in the whole development of this rhetorical theology? We've talked a lot about the humanist tradition, but I'm just wondering if it might have a lot to do with the constant attention to the biblical text.

Bouwsma: Well Prof. Murphy referred to Calvin's preaching as systematic explication du texte; it was, of course. At an earlier point, someone suggested that his sermons were not eloquent, if I understand this correctly, because they weren't fully rhetorical, because a dialectical element intruded into them as well. I think that Calvin's sermons were not eloquent, not because of any dialectical element in them - this is not very conspicuous - but because of one strand in the rhetorical tradition itself - what Camporeale calls eruditio, as opposed to persuasio. Calvin wanted to be persuasive, but he felt that he had also to be constantly responsive to the text. He frequently attacked people who preached anything but the Word of God as he conceived it. And that's why his sermons are not eloquent. As I said, there are eloquent passages in them, but they are not eloquent as a whole because they are broken up, not on the basis of an aesthetic structure, but on the basis of the order of verses in the text. Eruditio, too, was regarded as part of the rhetorical tradition - that part of it which involved nourishing oneself through careful study of texts.

Lyons: Along with that, then, would you say that the attention to tropes and rhetoric as style - eloquence - as opposed to discovering truth, or inventio, explains the correlation between Ramism which, basically, promoted that to some degree, and sermons which do not intend to discover the truth, but to convey Truth thru the text. And so the sermons themselves are not really aiming to allude to something new, but merely to convey...

Bouwsma: I think that's very much to the point.

Murphy: Would it be fair to call that "oral exegesis?"

Bouwsma: Yes, I think that's a very apt designation. It's also, perhaps, worth pointing out in this connection that Calvin did not write them. They were delivered extemporaneously, without notes, with nothing but the Scriptures. We have texts of them, because he had a scribe trying to get everything down. Eventually he employed a committee of three who would get together after the sermon and prepare a master copy, the notion being that what one of the secretaries didn't get, another probably had. But there were undoubtedly times when no one got quite what was said, and they simply filled in as best they could, and they may have made mistakes. Calvin's commentaries were delivered in exactly the same way, except for the first Romans commentary whose publication he oversaw himself. The degree to which he reviewed these copies is, to me, very problematic. He was an extraordinarily busy man, and I think it doubtful that he had time, in most cases, for a thorough review of

what his scribes had taken down. Most of the sermons, of course, were never published in his lifetime, and some of them haven't been yet. In fact, a large number have been lost altogether. The commentaries were mostly published in his lifetime with his approval, but I think that if he had gone over them carefully, he might have removed such remarks at the end as, "No lecture tomorrow; consistory meets."

Anderson: Well, then, it comes down to what his concept of a sermon was. And apparently his concept was that it was not something that required eloquence, that the text required elucidation with a maximum of accuracy and with a minimum of content.

Wuellner: But the text was rhetorical for him, wasn't it? He didn't have to import rhetoric - he was just the servant of it.

Anderson: And then there's the question of audience. The audience, apparently, lapped it up.

Bouwsma: There is something else here, and that is his insistence that a good sermon must be hot, not cold. For Calvin the coldness conventionally attributed to him was absolutely anathema; that was the worst thing. The sermon certainly was to convey the word of God into the hearts of the congregation, and for this the collaboration of the Holy Spirit is required. But only a "hot" sermon, for Calvin, can move the hearts of people.

Coleman: Your last remarks go back to the question that was raised earlier about how the rhetorical tradition contributed to the substance of Calvin. I was going to suggest that perhaps - I don't know - but surely Calvin stands out in the history of theology as a more serious reappropriation of the doctrine of the Spirit than one has seen since patristic times. I just wondered if you might want to comment about that? You had mentioned something about the incarnation, but in response to the question of how the rhetorical tradition entered into the substance, it would seem that something about the way in which the Holy Spirit is helping, not only the eloquence, but also the reception - in heart speaking to heart. The fact that Calvin plays that up so much compared to other people may be connected to this tradition. Do you have any ideas on that?

Bouwsma: One of the frustrating things about Calvin is that, to many of the questions we would really like to ask of him, he gives no explicit answer; one can only try to develop what seems implicit in what he says. On this question, I don't believe that I have encountered, or identified, passages in which he really says what it is he thinks has happened, in which he dissects the process and works out the pattern by which this collaboration between the Holy Spirit and preaching of the word is accomplished. I'm not sure, if you could ask him, that he would be able to tell you. It's a mystery, it's a miracle... when it happens, you know it has happened.

Wuellner: Did he have contact with rabbinic scholars in Geneva?

Bouwsma: As far as I know, he did not. He knew Hebrew.

Wuellner: But no personal connection with Jewish people?

Bouwsma: During his exile in Strasbourg, a Jewish scholar named Josel of Rosheim, who apparently liked to engage in polemics with Christians, reported that he was attacked in a most violent way by some unnamed person, and his description suggests that this may have been Calvin. That's the only possibility of Calvin's contact with a Jew that I have come across.

Wuellner: The reason I asked that is that in the fifteenth century there was a remarkable revival of interest in matters rhetoric within the Jewish community,² and I just wondered whether the clear record of centuries of Jewish preoccupation with sermon and interpreting the word of God - whether there was some - not just humanistic influence on Calvin - but specifically Jewish influence.

Wire: I have a question which again alludes to the audience. You say the sermons were addressed to the burgers. Were the sermons so closely tied to the text because of authority of the text to the burgers? If these people had been separated from the long-standing authority of the pope and tradition and were depending completely on the text for their authority, that may have been a very strong dependence. Was this the authority from which the sermon got its persuasive power? the closer to the text, the more persuasive?

Bouwsma: I think that is a plausible suggestion, although there are problems in trying to understand the congregations to which Calvin preached. He was not a popular figure in Geneva, nor I think was Protestantism a particularly popular cause. Many of you know this as well as I - Geneva was involved in a kind of communal revolution, both against its bishop and the Duke of Savoy who had control of the bishopric. The only support that the Genevans had against the bishop and Savoy was the military power of Berne, which was considerable. But the support of Berne largely depended on Geneva's adherence to the Reformed cause. Neither Calvin nor Farel was much liked; they were expelled soon after they got to work and displayed what they had in mind for Geneva. Although Calvin returned three years later, there was constant protest and agitation against him. Church attendance was not exactly voluntary, and I think a large part of his congregation was likely to be very sullen, and there were occasional demonstrations of hostility during the services. Parker reports an episode in which a group in the congregation whistled and shouted during the sermon. When Calvin ordered them to be silent, they shouted back (Parker discreetly leaves these words in French), "You may stop us from shouting and whistling, but you can't stop us from belching and farting." There's another interesting piece of evidence about the attitude of Geneva towards Protestantism: during Calvin's lifetime, not a single native was a minister in Geneva. Geneva's Protestantism was not altogether popular; it was something of a foreign imposition - a political necessity. Many of you have seen the monstrous icons behind the University in Geneva at the Reformers' Wall, two and a half times life size. I wonder what Calvin himself might have thought of this kind of celebration. I sometimes think of the forbidding, stony figure of

2. see Isaac Rabinowitz, "Pre-Modern Jewish Study of Rhetoric: An Introductory Bibliography," Rhetorica 3(Spring 1985):137-144.

Calvin here as Geneva's revenge.

Wuellner: But Anne's question is so very apropos; if he had any inkling at all what his audience was, he must have made some accommodation to that.

Wire: Could he have directed his sermons at the French emigres? Jeannine Olson indicates that the sermons we have come from '51 to '61, and by that time the local folks may have increasingly been ostracised and expelled. If that process is what some people think it was, and an increasing percentage of people from France have come in, Calvin may think of them as his audience and their values might have an effect on the appeals he makes to scripture.

Bouwsma: I think it's possible, but unfortunately we can't see all the sermons. To trace such an accommodation; many were sold off for waste paper by a librarian who didn't realize what they were. That may also suggest something about how Calvin was remembered in Geneva at that time - in the eighteenth century.

Anderson: Does the term "hot" that you use, and then the term "eloquent" - are these identical terms, in your opinion? So, you're saying that in not being eloquent, they were not "hot"? And, therefore, it follows that Calvin didn't know what he was doing.

Bouwsma: Eloquence, Calvin knew, is a product not only of heat but also of training. A certain personal energy, itself a gift of God, is necessary for eloquence.

Anderson: But what about heat? Is it possible to apprehend this written text that somebody's taken down, and say it's not "hot" in Calvin's terms?

Bouwsma: I think that would be somewhat difficult to say. John Leith, who I think has read more of Calvin's sermons and certainly thought more about them than anyone else I know, has tried to reproduce them orally; as I understand it, he tapes them and then listens to the tapes. He thinks that they come off very much better orally than they do in print. My French really isn't good enough to be able to perform that test.

Jarrett: I think this is a somewhat related question. Earlier on there seemed to be a certain conflation between the will and emotion. I was curious to know with Gadamer whether in Calvin's time, there was anything like a clear-cut distinction - that certainly later was orthodox, and in some sense in classical times was suggested - a kind of three-fold distinction, cognitive, conative and emotive. Would that have been present, clearly, in his thinking - as a set of distinctions?

Bouwsma: When I first began examining his own analysis of the personality, I expected to find a great deal there about the will. I was puzzled to discover that there was very little; Calvin hardly ever talks about the will. I am still a little uncertain about what to make of this. It may be partly that, in his more traditional and philosophical anthropology, the will does not really figure very significantly because it is understood as the more or less obedient servant either of intellect or reason or of the lower faculties in a

well-ordered personality. It has no capacity for independence; it is pulled one way or the other. That may be part of why Calvin doesn't talk about it, and, maybe also, he's a little worried that if he talks too much about the will, people will be drawn to Pelagianism. But it just isn't there.

Wuellner: But it might be worth emphasizing here, in passing, something I learned from Klaus Dockhorn,³ that it was the systematic exploration of pathos in sixteenth, seventeenth century rhetoric which was the father of modern psychology.

Bouwsma: I think I can understand why, with its emphasis on the passions, the extraordinary power and complexity of the passions, and the way in which they can conflict with each other - the strange patterns of behavior that sets off.

Leahy: I'm just wondering about the implications of the term theologia rhetorica. Certainly the dimension of "decorum" in the description of rhetoric is basically important, but I'm also very used to the concept of "argument" as being essential to rhetoric.⁴ If theologia rhetorica involves argument, it sounds like one is getting into an intellectual, rational, systematic, dogmatic dimension of theology. Can there be a genuine theology which is completely lacking in argument? What about Calvin's use of argument?

Bouwsma: I'd like to turn at least part of this question over to Prof. Murphy - for varieties of rhetoric, some of which give a larger share to argument than others.

Wuellner: With all that emphasis on the rhetorical that aims at conversion and the volitional, there is also an element of intellectual assent. Assent gets at the convictional level where you affirm the truth and correctness of things. In that assent lie the philosophical, theological, thematic aspects. It isn't just rhetorical persuasion or conviction, but both of these elements. In the theologia rhetorica you look for both not as ends in themselves, but as means of something that includes an element of the heart, the conversion aspect, that inner assent, the fire, the "hot" stuff, that is in tension with that "cool" rationality.

Bouwsma: Could I have another try at that? Rhetorical communication, I would describe as communication not of information, knowledge, but as communication that is intended to make something happen - to make something happen in another human being, or in a group of beings. Now in order to make something happen, you've got to appeal to the deepest possible levels of their personality, to appeal to the heart. Calvin is constantly contrasting that sort of communication with argument, that is, a kind of communication which he says settles only in the top of the brain - for which he has very little respect.

3. Klaus Dockhorn, Macht und Wirkung der Rhetorik. Vier Aufsätze zur Ideengeschichte der Vormoderne. Respublica Literaria 2 (Berlin/Zurich: Gehlen, 1968).

4. Aristotle, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, trans. by Lane Cooper, (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1960); William J. Brandt, The Rhetoric of Argumentation (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970).

Jarrett: Isn't this Aristotle's practical syllogism? If you argue properly, the conclusion of the syllogism is, then you do this.

Bouwsma: Calvin is sometimes guilty of making that mistake, but not often. He will say, for example, if a person appreciates all the reasons for marriage, he cannot help but love his wife.

Nuveen: With this definition of rhetoric, is there a rhetoric of painting? There were some quite exciting things happening visually about this time, the end of the fourteen hundreds.

Bouwsma: Well Michael Baxandall, who has just joined our faculty, talks a lot about parallels between rhetoric and painting.

Melia: There is no explicit theory of rhetoric and painting?

Bouwsma: I don't know much about this, though it was well understood in the Renaissance that painting tells stories. I don't know what bearing that might have on Calvin, whose appreciation for artistic creation seems to me limited and backward. Unlike some of the more daring thinkers of his time, he can't think of art as creative - God alone can create. The notion of a human creation would be presumptuous. Art must be imitation.

Wuellner: As you look back at what your respondents presented us with - in the light of this evening's discussion, do you have some remarks about where you will go from here with all this?

Bouwsma: I would like to make just one point, and that is the value of recognizing that a great deal of Calvin's discourse is rhetorical and intended to make something happen, rather than to make a careful statement of what he regarded as doctrine.

Wuellner: And how does one interpret that - how does one get at that?

Bouwsma: Instead of talking about that in general, I'd like to say something about one particular doctrine in Calvin about which there has been much disagreement. Trinkaus pointed to it when he asked what Calvin believed about the survival after the fall of God's image and likeness. I understand that this has been the subject of a major controversy between Barth and Brunner, and more recently, Torrance has repeated Barth's view that, for Calvin, God's image was obliterated by the fall. I am firmly convinced that this is wrong and that it is based on a failure to recognize how strongly rhetorical much of Calvin's communication is. When he appears to be arguing for the total destruction of God's image, this is an expression not of his doctrine but of his fear that too great an emphasis on the persistence of God's image in human beings, might encourage pride and presumption. I have a section of a sermon (in the Opera Calvini, XLVII, cols 480-81) - as a matter of fact, I brought it with me - in which he deals with this. It's a sermon on the opening lines of the first gospel, and Calvin started off with a great paean to the image and likeness of God in human beings. There's no question that he's talking about everybody since the fall. But then, after going on in this way for a while, presumably because he suddenly began to worry about the consequences of this line of

thought, he reversed his direction and began to denounce human nature. But after he had done this for a while, he seemed to be disturbed that he was again giving the wrong impression and undercutting what he started off with, and so he reversed himself once more. It's an extraordinary performance. I am quite convinced that the controversy over where Calvin stood on this matter rests on a misunderstanding of the nature of his discourse. There's no question in my mind about his position, but one must recognize the rhetorical character of his discourse in order to see it.

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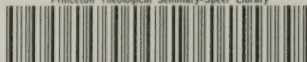
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